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NATURE, MIRACLE AND SIN: A Study of St. Augustine's Conception of the Natural Order. - - - By T. A. LACEY, M.A.

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THE PRINGLE STUART
LECTURES FOR 1914

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PREFACE

THESE lectures were delivered in the Schools at Oxford during the summer term of the year 1914, on the appointment of the Warden and Council of Keble College under the terms of the Pringle Stuart Trust. They are printed for the most part as read, but some passages were omitted in the Schools for lack of time, and other gaps afterwards observed in the argument have been filled. In the fourth lecture I have expanded the single sentence which was all that I could devote to an interesting suggestion made two or three days previously by Dr. Sanday. The sixth has undergone a drastic revision, which owes not a little to a brief and pungent criticism passed upon it at the time of delivery by Mr. Way of the Pusey House.

I have tried to keep close to my subject, and I hope it will be allowed that on the whole I have been successful. Some strength of will was needed, for St. Augustine's discursiveness is an infectious quality, and he spreads another snare, even more insidious, for the interested reader. If on one page he seems to belong to a world almost grotesquely antique, on the next he may stand forth as a modern of all

times. That is due partly to his large humanity, partly to his devouring curiosity and wide sweep of vision. He is constantly provoking discussion of a question of to-day, and his challenge will no doubt be repeated to-morrow. But my task has been to find out what he himself thought, not what he may suggest to successive ages. His suggestions will perhaps be the more fruitful if we are careful to make sure what they meant for his own mind.

These two disturbing qualities make quotation from his works a perilous adventure. He was a master of phrase, a rhetorician born and made, but a laborious thinker; his dialectic circled round his words with disconcerting digression. A sparkling epigram, an apparently precise definition, leaps to the eye; it is well to be careful, to look backward and forward, and to look far. Indexing is as dangerous with him as versicular quotation with St. Paul. Well-known flowers of speech, culled from his luxuriant garden, have a history. Every student of the history of dogmatic theology knows what has been built on his vivid remark, 'accedit uerbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum'—an incomplete quotation even of a single sentence. Thousands have cited 'Securus iudicat orbis terrarum,' for one who has taken the trouble to find out what he meant by it.

Consideration of this difficulty has induced me to make for myself a rule which may seem whimsical, but in which I have found safety. Where two sets of reference numbers are current in the editions, one for longer chapters and the other for shorter sections, I have made a point of using the larger divisions. If this gives a little more trouble to a

reader who wishes to follow up a reference or to catch me tripping, his time may be well spent.

There is an Appendix. I have ventured to disinter two essays, previously published, which deal less academically with some of the topics of the lectures. One of them was written many years ago, at a time when I had read nothing of St. Augustine except some minor treatises, with parts of the Confessions and *De Ciuitate Dei.* How far he had then influenced me I cannot say. My memory calls up no consciousness of indebtedness, but, looking back, I think that something must have filtered into my mind from his to make me write this essay. It was, to be sure, very imperfectly assimilated. I hope that my present acquaintance with him, which is certainly wider, may also be found less superficial. A third essay, on Dr. McTaggart's Idealism, appears here for the first time.

I must apologize to the reader for faults in the correction of the press due to the present weakness of my sight. I have had valuable help, but there is no sufficient substitute for the author's eye. The references, happily, were twice verified before my trouble began, but two small errors have been detected, and perfection is far to seek in this field; a third revision intended has been found impracticable.

The publication of the book has been delayed for many months by the disturbance of business due to the war. The delay has an effect. Some of the controversies glanced at in the lectures may seem to be antiquated, like many disputes, by this great cataclysm in human affairs. But in other respects

the questions treated are made even more urgent. The war and its incidents, the appalling collapse of Christian civilization, the abandonment in certain quarters of the barest pretence of conforming to Christian ideals, make the problem of evil more insistent than it has ever been for our generation. We have returned to that loosening of social order, that contempt for law, that domination of material power, which in other ages forced upon men the question whether there is any moral government of the world, or any eternal standard of right; it will not be surprising if the notion of an equally eternal and indestructible force of evil, set in conflict with good, comes into new prominence. Moral dualism is a refuge from solid thinking always welcome to a faltering intelligence; it is always resurgent in Christendom, and a recrudescence of it at the present time may be a greater peril than appears on the surface. St. Augustine's hard fight for the moral unity of creation may have to be renewed in ourselves; his great syntheses will help us, and his mistakes may warn us off treacherous ground.

T. A. L.

March, 1916.

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NATURE, MIRACLE, AND SIN

LECTURE I

THE MAN AND HIS FORMATION

THE founder of this Lecture gave his benefaction for the purpose of promoting the study of the writings of the Early Fathers of the Church, and also of the writings of John Keble. Invited by the trustees to read the first set of lectures on the foundation, I thought it my duty to bear in mind this double intention. It need not be difficult, for Keble, entirely as he was of his own time and place in the history of Christianity, so steeped himself in certain branches of patristic theology that many openings might be found for entering into that way of reference to Catholic antiquity in which he wished his whole thought to move. But what may seem easy in general is not always easy for this or that person. The habitual movement of my own mind is so different from that of this master, revered and loved, that I hesitated before the task imposed. One subject I put aside expressly because my treatment of it would be likely rather to conflict with Keble's habit of thought than to illustrate it. Seeking another,

and turning over some of his less familiar writings, I lighted upon an essay dealing with Miller's Bampton Lectures, in the course of which he passes judgment on a certain theological exaggeration characteristic of the time. Let me read this passage :—' As therefore it is a sound rule in common life to make up our minds beforehand that in those whom we admire most there is some evil, and in those for whom we fear most some good, though neither perhaps be yet discernible by us : so the Scripture doctrine of original and actual sin, being no more than this position generalized and accounted for, is found strictly in accordance with real observation. And it is grievously to be lamented that many good and wise men should have so far forgotten this as to have given, unnecessarily, double ground of grievous offence, by stating the doctrine of man's guiltiness as if God had positively declared it equal in every case, and infinite in all. We say " double ground of offence : " for it is notorious that to the speculative unbeliever this statement must be a stumbling-block, because it seems immediately to contradict experience ; and to the practical one it supplies an excuse too sure to be taken hold of, in the encouragement which it gives him to lay his own sin upon Adam's, or upon his Maker ; in its tendency to foster that worst kind of fatalism, whereby we look upon certain crimes as matters of course, much to be regretted indeed, but as regularly to be expected in certain seasons and situations as fog in autumn, or blight in spring.' [1]

[1] *Occasional Papers and Reviews*, 1877, p. 195. The essay was not published until it appeared in this collection, but it was evidently written soon after the delivery of the lectures in the year 1817, and intended for publication in some Review.

The teaching here reprobated is commonly reckoned to be Augustinian. Its disseminators have always claimed St. Augustine as their patron, and their opponents have in many cases surrendered him without investigation.

Here was a subject made to my hand. What is, in truth, the teaching of St. Augustine about the depravity of human nature? But that question cannot be isolated. Man is but a part of the natural universe, the *rerum natura*. The whole must be considered as a whole, and the most superficial acquaintance with the writings of Augustine makes it plain that he was himself peculiarly aware of this necessity. It is soon evident that for him nature is nothing if not a *continuum*. But then two questions are forced upon the reader.

The first is concerned with a problem always urgent, the moral difficulty confronting all monistic ways of thinking, the problem of the appearance of evil in the world. We must not ask how St. Augustine solved the problem, for he left it unsolved; but we may ask how he stated the problem, how he related evil of all kinds, and especially human depravity, to the natural order. Did he evade the difficulty by outfacing evil and reducing it to a kind of inferior good? Did he, on the other hand, attribute to it a mode of existence which involves a permanent and universal dualism, a conflict inherent in nature? Or, finally, did he find some midway track between these courses of thought? We have to ask how he related sin to nature.

The second question is one that is urgent in our day. What is Miracle, and how related to

nature ? It is a question which did not much trouble Augustine, though he could not altogether escape it ; for whole ages it slept, because men rested in a conception of nature which allowed ample room for miraculous occurrences ; it is possible that we may soon achieve another conception equally elastic ; but at the present time most of us are in difficulties, and we cannot approach the study of St. Augustine's conception of nature without asking how he found room in it for those miracles which he unhesitatingly believed to happen. Happily, he had occasion now and then to consider the question for himself, and his incidental treatment of it may serve to satisfy our curiosity ; perhaps, also, it may afford us some help in the readjustment of our own ideas. We have to inquire, then, how St. Augustine related miracle to nature.

The bounds of my subject are thus determined. There are whole tracts of St.Augustine's teaching which I dare not, indeed, neglect, because the mystery of nature so possessed his soul that flashes of thought concerning it leap out from the most unexpected places, but which have no content bearing expressly on my theme. It is well. A reader of St. Augustine draws a deep breath of relief when he passes away, never for a long spell, from the Donatist controversy. It is always cropping up, but there are times when it is at least in the background, and we shall not be troubled with it. The worst that we have to put up with professedly is the block of the antipelagian treatises. These have a charm for some minds. Saint-Cyran is said to have read them all through, carefully, thirty times. That may account for a good

deal in Jansenism. Others find in them much that is unlovely; a hardness, a cold and relentless ratiocination, that handles human actions and human fortunes as if they were cog-wheels in some huge machine, and grinds out consequences with fatalistic inevitability. Others, again, think to find something worse: the attribution to God of a tyrannous will, a justice that rejoices against mercy. A third opinion, more obviously wide of the mark, has considerable vogue. It has become a commonplace to say that Augustine, under the stress of the Pelagian controversy, relapsed into Manichæism. It amazes me that anyone acquainted with his writings can repeat the stale slander. The charge was laid against him in his own day by Julian of Eclanum,[1] but that was mere bludgeon-work of controversy; a more penetrating criticism might have found in the same department of his teaching a dangerous likeness to the Platonic form of dualism. The Pelagians, indeed, began by making great play with his earlier writings against the Manichæans. When he proceeded to fill up the interstices of the argument in which they had entrenched themselves, they accused him of going back on his conclusions. He did modify them as he saw need, but he continued to affirm without wavering the great principles which he had maintained from the time of his conversion. In debate with Julian, no less than when writing *de libero arbitrio*, he affirmed the fundamental doctrine that sin is a *spontaneus defectus a bono*.[2] To the very

[1] *Contra Iulianum*, i. 3. 'Tu qui tam crebro nobis Manichaeorum nomen opponis.'

[2] *Ibid.* i. 8. 'Bonorum auctor est Deus, dum auctor est naturarum, quarum spontaneus defectus a bono non indicat a

end he kept bringing up, with almost wearisome iteration, the phrase which he made a kind of catch-word: 'Omnis natura, in quantum natura est, bonum est.' The phase of St. Augustine's thought with which we are concerned is singularly stable and consistent. If the hammerer of the Pelagians seem to you another man than the urbane author of the Dialogues or the passionate pilgrim of the Confessions, you will do well to remember that you are dealing with one who was always various. He was of a largeness and a depth to find room for many moods. At the crisis of his conversion he did not wear his heart on his sleeve, but discoursed serene philosophy with friends and pupils in the pleasant retreat of Cassiciacum. I can doubt neither the superficial veracity of the Dialogues, nor the story of the deep agony of soul that you read in the Confessions. Look at him on all sides, and in those early days you will find traces of the grim judgment which becomes dominant when he is at grips with the smooth prophesyings of the Pelagians; you will find no less in his latest writings the fundamental postulates from which he set out.

But what is the starting point? He himself dated everything from his conversion. Until his thirty-second year he was a mere seeker. Then he pictured himself as entering into the truth, and reducing all his speculations to order. He apologized for including in his Retractations even those books

quo factae sunt, sed unde factae sunt; et hoc non est aliquid, quoniam penitus nihil est, et ideo non potest auctorem habere quod nihil est.' Cf. *De Libero Arbitrio*, iii. 1, where he shows that the movement of the will from good to evil 'non est utique naturalis sed uoluntarius.'

which he wrote in the first days of his renunciation, before he was practised in Christian thought and letters; all that was earlier was negligible. We can hardly follow him in this judgment. We want to know what he brought of the glory and honour of the nations into the Christian Church; and happily he has himself supplied sufficient evidence of the formative influences which made his thought what it was.

I must keep as closely as possible to my own subject, which is not the whole of St. Augustine's thought, but a part of it. Let us rapidly consider his formation.

Of his humanity it is needless to say much. The whole world, and not Christendom alone, acknowledges the Confessions for one of the great human documents of history. Other qualities need consideration.

He was a Christian in some sense from the first, a catechumen. 'While yet a boy,' he says, 'I heard of the eternal life promised us through the coming of our Lord God who humbled Himself to the level of our pride.' That implies a considerable amount of Christian teaching. He knew enough to desire baptism when sick.[1] It will not do to lay much stress

[1] *Confess.* i. 11. 'Audieram enim ego adhuc puer de uita aeterna promissa nobis per humilitatem domini Dei nostri descendentis ad superbiam nostram, et signabar iam signo crucis eius et condiebar eius sale iam inde ab utero matris meae, quae multum sperauit in te. Uidisti, domine, cum adhuc puer essem et quodam die pressu stomachi repente aestuarem paene moriturus, uidisti, Deus meus, quoniam custos meus iam eras, quo motu animi et qua fide baptismum Christi tui, Dei et domini mei, flagitaui a pietate matris meae et matris omnium nostrum, ecclesiae tuae.'

on his mother's influence. It has been suggested that he never understood her, and I am disposed to think that is true ; the mind of a woman was probably a sealed book to him ; however that may be, the Monnica of Cassiciacum, and of the wonderful days at Rome that followed, was a very different woman from the pious but rather frivolous girl who found herself so helpless in dealing with his boyish escapades. Still, he grew up under her eye, more or less Christian.

In the next place he was an African. It means a good deal. Climatic influence made the Romans of the African provinces what they would not have been elsewhere. Their literature from Appuleius onwards bears the mark of it. The Garden of Allah was close at hand, then as now. There is a hardness and coarseness of fibre in the people of this country which produced effects in ecclesiastical controversy. Tertullian did not live there for nothing. The Circumcellions were thoroughly African, and if we knew all we should probably find them fairly well matched by Catholic zealots. The 'foeda et intemperans licentia scholasticorum,' which drove Augustine from Carthage to teach in the more disciplined schools of Rome,[1] was characteristic. There is a particular aspect of nature, and especially of human nature, proper to the country. Things will stand out in vivid nakedness. I am inclined to attribute to this the brutality—there is no other word for it—displayed by Augustine in his treatment of women. You find it in his conduct towards the mother of his son, the faithful companion of many years, whom he

[1] *Confess.* v. 8.

dismissed, in view of a suitable marriage, with considerable regard for his own loss, but little or none for her feelings.[1] You find it in his conduct towards the young bride chosen for him by his mother at Milan, whom he accepted coldly and then tossed aside without further thought.[2] You find it in the curious lack of reserve, the downright indelicacy, with which he would discuss the most intimate matters of sex in his public discourses. You find it in the frank animality of which he made no secret, while he rode it on the curb. There was a touch of romance in his youth, when he was in love with love—'amare amabam,' he says;[3] but it was burnt out of his manhood. There are finer things which you may put down to the same influence. In his incessant use of imagery there is a vivid appreciation of nature. If the fierceness of the African sun was in his veins, the splendour of it inspired his frequent comparison of that corporeal shining with the uncreated light of God's presence.[4] While you reverence the saint in Augustine, you are never allowed for long to forget that he is an African saint.

The third influence to be reckoned with is Manichæism. This must not be misunderstood. The

[1] *Confess.* vi. 15. 'Auulsa a latere meo tamquam impedimento coniugii cum qua cubare solitus eram, cor, ubi adhaerebat, concisum et uulneratum mihi erat et trahebat sanguinem, et illa in Africam redierat uouens tibi alium se uirum nescituram relicto apud me naturali ex illa filio meo.'

[2] *Ibid.* vi. 13. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 1.

[4] See, for example, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, i. 3. 'Solis istius lumen non illuminat omnem hominem, sed opus hominis et mortales oculos, in quibus nos uincunt aquilarum oculi, qui solem istum multo melius quam nos dicuntur adspicere. Illud autem lumen non inrationabilium auium oculos pascit, sed pura corda eorum qui Deo credunt.'

Manichæism which Augustine knew was not the pure offshoot of Persian dualism to which that name properly belongs. It was the doctrine of Faustus, of the *Epistula Fundamenti*; a doctrine which professed to be distinctively Christian. 'Manichæus apostolus Iesu Christi' is the name in which the Epistle was written. Augustine tells us why he was drawn to this doctrine. There were two attractions. In the first place it offered a simple solution of the problem of evil, which had the farther advantage of delivering the evil doer from responsibility for his acts.[1] In the second place it promised complete intellectual enlightenment. The Catholic Church bade men believe, assent to doctrines unproved and irrational; but the Manichæan teachers would lead the disciple on from proof to proof, asking only for adhesion to what was made good at each step.[2] There were fantastic mythologies in their writings, but the meaning of these would be gradually unfolded. To the perfect, all would be clear.

It seems to have been chiefly this promise of proof, this appeal to the intellect, which drew the young Augustine. He describes himself as passionately

[1] *De Libero Arbitrio*, i. 2. 'E. Dic mihi unde male faciamus. A. Iam quaestionem moues quae me admodum adulescentum uehementer exercuit, et fatigatum in haereticos impulit.' *Confess.* v. 10. 'Adhuc enim mihi uidebatur non esse nos qui peccamus, sed nescio quam aliam in nobis peccare naturam, et delectabat superbiam meam extra culpam esse, et, cum aliquid mali fecissem, non confiteri me fecisse, ut sanares animam meam, quoniam peccabat tibi, sed excusare me amabam et accusare nescio quid aliud, quod mecum esset et ego non essem.'

[2] *De Utilitate Credendi*, i. 'Non aliam ob causam nos in tales homines incidisse, nisi quod se dicebant, terribili auctoritate separata, mera et simplici ratione eos qui se audire uellent introducturos ad Deum et errore omni liberaturos.'

seeking the truth, 'apertum et sincerum uerum tenere atque haurire cupientem.'[1] And observe—it is important for us—that what he was seeking was the truth of nature. There was in him at this time the making of a natural philosopher. According to our modern notions there is something tragic in his turning aside from this course. He was ready to be an explorer, a discoverer. And not without fruit. He acquired some knowledge of elementary astronomy, and thereupon found the Manichæan myths of the heavenly bodies to be ridiculous.[2] He was told to wait until he had heard Faustus. Faustus came to Carthage, and Augustine found him a windbag.[3] Perhaps he would have been less dissatisfied if he had not discovered that the famous teacher had read nothing but some of Cicero's orations, a little of Seneca, some fragments of poetry, and the Latin books of his own sect. It is probable that he did Faustus less than justice, but all the scholar in him revolted from this pretentious professor of little learning, and all his confidence in the Manichæan teachers went by the board. If you are inclined to complain that he did not afterwards apply the same measure to Christian teachers, you must remember that these made no such parade of universal knowledge. The Manichæans promised too much, and failed him.

With what result? It seems that Augustine gave up once and for all his dream of penetrating the secrets of nature. He never lost his interest in phenomena. That is constantly reappearing. He arrived eventually at a fairly complete synthesis of

[1] *De Utilitate Credendi*, i. [2] *Confess.* v. 3. [3] *Ibid.* 6.

the known and the unknown. But he was content to leave vast tracts unknown. He acquired the Socratic attitude, questioning, but confessing that no answer could be found.[1]

For a time he took refuge in the complete scepticism of the Academy. He resumed, indeed, his place in the Catholic Church as a catechumen, but not hopefully. He would wait for more light. Fourteen years afterwards he gave in the Confessions a curious account of his attitude at this time. Philosophic scepticism had destroyed his belief in Manichæism, but he could not commit his soul to the Academics, because they had not 'the saving name of Christ.' He was casting back. 'Spes mea a iuuentute mea,' he cries, 'ubi mihi eras et quo recesseras?'[2] There is probably some measure of afterthought in this, but you should read it along with his curious testimony that when he was first drawn to the study of philosophy at

[1] *Enchir.* 3. 'Cum ergo quaeritur, quid credendum sit quod ad religionem pertineat, non rerum natura ita rimanda est quemadmodum ab eis quos physicos Graeci uocant: nec metuendum est ne aliquid de ui et numero elementorum, de motu atque ordine et defectibus siderum, de figura caeli, de generibus et naturis animalium, fruticum, lapidum, fontium, fluminum, montium, de spatiis locorum et temporum, de signis inminentium tempestatum, et alia sexcenta de eis rebus, quas illi uel inuenerunt uel inuenisse se existimant, Christianus ignoret: quia nec ipsi omnia reppererunt tanto excellentes ingenio, flagrantes studio, abundantes otio, et quaedam humana coniectura inuestigantes, quaedam uero historica experientia perscrutantes, et in eis quae se inuenisse gloriantur plura opinantes potius quam scientes. Satis est Christiano rerum creatarum causam, siue caelestium siue terrestrium siue uisibilium siue inuisibilium, non nisi bonitatem credere Creatoris.' But cf. *In Ioan.* 53. 'Non quia ista negata sunt nobis, cum Deus magister dicat: *Nihil est occultum quod non reuelabitur;* sed in quo peruenimus in eo ambulemus.' Also *De Trinit.* iii. 2; *infra*, p. 79.

[2] *Confess.* v. 14; vi. 1. *De Util. Cred.* 8.

nineteen years of age by reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, he shrank from complete and enthusiastic surrender to that guidance because the name of Christ was not there; that name he had drunk in with his mother's milk, and without it nothing could satisfy him.[1] So now, in his thirtieth year, he could not give himself wholly to a philosophy that was not Christian. But the Dialogue *Contra Academicos*, written immediately before his baptism, seems to imply a closer entanglement than his memory afterwards charged him with.[2] During his sojourn at Rome, and in the first year of his public teaching at Milan, it is pretty clear that he went far in the profession of scepticism. Some little time later, he wrote of his escape from that net with an air of great relief.[3]

This, however, should be observed. In the letter to Hermogenianus, sent with a copy of the Dialogue, he hints that the teaching of the Academics was popularly misunderstood,[4] and in the Dialogue itself there is a suggestion that their scepticism

[1] *Confess.* iii. 4.

[2] *Contra Acad.* ii. 9. 'Tune ergo nescis nihil me certum adhuc habere quod sentiam, sed ab eo quaerendo Academicorum argumentis atque disputationibus impediri. Nescio enim quomodo fecerunt in animo quandam probabilitatem, ut ab eorum uerbo nondum recedam, quod homo uerum inuenire non possit; unde piger et prorsus segnis effectus eram, nec quaerere audebam quod acutissimis ac doctissimis uiris inuenire non licuit.'

[3] *Epist.* i. 3. 'Non tam me delectat, ut scribis, quod Academicos uicerim—scribis enim hoc amantius forte quam uerius —quam quod mihi abruperim odiosissimum retinaculum, quo a philosophiae ubere desperatione ueri, quod est animi pabulum refrenabar.'

[4] *Ibid.* i. 1. 'Academicos ego ne inter iocandum quidem unquam lacessere auderem . . . nisi eos putarem longe in aliam quam uulgo creditum est fuisse sententiam.'

was little more than a pose ; they veiled their meaning behind such words as *probabile*, which were understood only by the keener intellects among their hearers.[1] This may indicate either that Augustine did not go very deeply into their thought, and suspected the presence of an esoteric sense beyond, or that he himself was conscious of such posing in his experiments with their philosophy.

The lasting effect of these expriements may be found in Augustine's correlation of faith and reason. *Credere* meant for him the acceptance of statements or opinions on authority. 'Quod intellegimus,' he wrote in early days, 'debemus rationi : quod credimus auctoritati.'[2] But the word *auctoritas* must not be misunderstood. It had not yet started on its travels to acquire the sense of arbitrary command in which it is now used. It still meant for Augustine pretty much what it meant for Cicero. This will be clearly seen from his comment in the Retractations on the sentence just now quoted. Substituting *scimus* for *intellegimus*, he says that in common parlance we need not be afraid to speak of *knowing* 'quod idoneis testibus credimus'[3] The reference to 'sufficient witness,' which is constant with him, is thus identified with the reference to authority. We believe the records of history on such authority, without the knowledge that comes of immediate experience.[4]

In his first book against Manichæism, *De Utilitate*

[1] *Contra Acad.* ii. 10, 13.

[2] *De Util. Cred.* 11. Cf. *Soliloquia*, i. 3. 'Omne quod scimus recte fortasse etiam credere dicimus ; at non omne quod credimus etiam scimus.'

[3] *Retract.* i. 14.

[4] *De Util. Cred.* 11. 'Credo enim sceleratissimos coniuratos uirtute Ciceronis quondam interfectos : atqui id non solum nescio, sed etiam nullo pacto me scire posse certo scio.' Cf. *Confess.* vi. 5.

Credendi, Augustine frankly confessed that the scepticism of the Academy helped to deliver him from the spurious intellectualism to which he had surrendered himself. But he explained also why he could not rest in this new way of thinking. The human mind, so intensely alive, so keen, so clear-seeing, how could it be incapable of attaining truth? The difficulty could arise only from ignorance of method: since this could not be discovered by introspection, it must be accepted 'ab aliqua diuina auctoritate.'[1] Two things stand out here: an obstinate conviction of the reality of self, and an obstinate trust in God as one who can communicate with men. The former is expressed in a passage of the Soliloquies which anticipates Descartes: 'You who would know yourself, do you know that you are? I know it. How do you know this? I know not. Do you know that you are moved? I know not. Do you know that you think? I know it.'[2] Augustine brought scepticism to a pragmatic test. He found himself compelled to affirm some things because he could not get away from them; he found himself compelled to believe some things because he could not do without them.

[1] *De Util. Cred.* 8.

[2] *Soliloq.* ii. 1. 'Tu qui uis te nosse, scis esse te? Scio. Unde scis? Nescio. Simplicem te sentis an multiplicem? Nescio. Moveri te scis? Nescio. Cogitare te scis? Scio. Ergo uerum est cogitare te? Uerum.' Cf. *De Lib. Arbitr.* ii. 3, where he makes this the fundamental axiom of existence: 'Prius abs te quaero, ut de manifestissimis capiamus exordium, utrum tu ipse sis: an tu fortasse metuis ne in hac interrogatione fallaris, cum utique, si non esses, falli omnino non posses?' Compare also *De Ciuit. Dei*, xi. 26, where it is the primary certainty. 'Nulla in his ueris Academicorum argumenta formido dicentium "Quid si falleris?" Si enim fallor, sum.'

I am not at present concerned with the use which he made of the principle of authority in finding his way to the Catholic Faith. But his conception of nature, which is our concern, depends on the same principle. Here also the maxim 'Crede ut intellegas' holds good. Here also 'fides praecedit rationem.'[1]

Something must be taken for granted, upon which the mind may work. Augustine's concentration upon ethical and religious interests made him work out his theory of knowledge in this region alone, but his theory is applicable to all kinds of knowledge. In the Dialogue *De Ordine* he states the process succinctly. Authority and reason are both necessary for learning. Authority is prior in time, though not in reality. There must be a process from inexperience to experience; but the inexperienced does not even know how to learn, and therefore authority must open the way to him. Entering on this way without doubting, he is taught by precept, and so will at length learn the reasonableness of what he has accepted without reasoning.[2]

Here is a method which, if applied to the study of phenomena, would approach closely to the scien-

[1] *In Ioan.* 29, 6. *Epist.* cxx. 3.

[2] *De Ordine*, ii. 9. 'Ad discendum necessario dupliciter ducimur, auctoritate atque ratione. Tempore auctoritas, re autem ratio prior est. . . . Quia nullus hominum nisi ex imperito peritus fit, nullus autem imperitus nouit qualem se debeat praebere docentibus et quali uita esse docilis possit, euenit ut omnibus bona magna et occulta discere cupientibus non aperiat nisi auctoritas ianuam. Quam quisque ingressus sine ulla dubitatione uitae optimae praecepta sectatur; per quae cum docilis factus fuerit, tum demum discet et quanta ratione praedita sint ea ipsa quae secutus est ante rationem, et quid sit ipsa ratio quam post auctoritatis cunabula firmus et idoneus iam sequitur et comprehendit.'

tific process of working hpyothesis and verification. Augustine learnt it in his struggle with Academic scepticism. It was not the less truly his method because he made but a partial application of it. He reckoned credulity a vice,[1] but we certainly count him credulous. He could not make up his mind whether to take as fact or as fiction the wildest inventions of Appuleius. But the character of the doubt should be observed. It is contemptuous; 'aut indicauit aut finxit,' he says, and dismisses the subject.[2] It did not matter whether such stories were true or not; they were not worth verifying. The philosophers of the Academy had taught him not to affirm anything; he refused compliance, but he had learnt not to deny rashly. He read wonderful stories in books of respectable authority like those of Varro;[3] he accepted them with indifference knowing that some very strange things are probably true, and that our knowledge of nature is limited; he was curious, but nothing more; his attention was engaged with things of real moment. In regard to these he had escaped from scepticism. 'Deum et animam scire cupio,' he cried, and for the rest, 'Nihil omnino.'[4] Here, too, he knew that knowledge was limited; for example, he could find no answer to a question about the origin of the soul

[1] *De Util. Cred.* 9. 'Ipsa, inquis, credulitas, a qua creduli nominantur, uitium quoddam mihi uidetur esse: alioquin hoc nomen non pro conuicio obiectare soleremus . . . Interim accipio hanc opinionem ac distinctionem.'

[2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xviii. 18. 'Appuleius in libris quos Asini Aurei titulo inscripsit sibi ipsi accidisse ut accepto ueneno, humano animo permanente, asinus fieret aut indicauit aut finxit.'

[3] *Ibid.* vi. 2 *seqq.* [4] *Soliloq.* i. 2.

which was constantly baffling him, and he tried in vain to draw Jerome into a discussion of it;[1] but there were some matters on which authority and reason could speak with positive results. Here he was busy, eagerly questioning and boldly answering. Elsewhere he was more or less contentedly uncertain. His very credulity was touched with scepticism. He stiffened in this attitude as he grew old; in the Retractations he withdrew the praise bestowed in the Dialogues on the liberal sciences; many holy men, he says, had been ignorant of these, and many versed in them were not holy.[2] In this way Augustine became the father of much obscurantism; but his own practice was to drain all the sources of knowledge that seemed to him accessible. Alike in the flush of his conversion and when preaching to his little flock at Hippo, he demanded the application of the mind even to the deepest things of God.

The impulse of learning, he says at the end of the Dialogue *Contra Academicos*, comes from the two forces of authority and reason; he was now firmly resolved to accept the authority of Christ, but his affections were set no less on understanding than on believing the truth.[3] Many years afterwards

[1] *De Lib. Arbitr.* iii. 20: *Epist.* clxvi.

[2] *Retract.* i. 3. 'In his libris displicet mihi . . . quod multum tribui liberalibus disciplinis, quas multi sancti multum nesciunt, quidam autem qui sciunt eas sancti non sunt.'

[3] *Contra Acad.* iii. 20. 'Nulli autem dubium est gemino pondere nos impelli ad discendum, auctoritatis atque rationis. Mihi autem certum est nusquam prorsus a Christi auctoritate discedere; non enim reperio ualentiorem. Quod autem subtilissima ratione persequendum est—ita enim iam sum affectus ut quid sit uerum non credendo solum sed etiam intellegendo apprehendere impatienter desiderem—apud Platonicos me interim quod sacris nostris non repugnet reperturum esse confido.'

he warned his people against neglect of intelligence in the words of the psalm, 'Be ye not like to horse and mule, which have no understanding.' The deep things of God were to be understood. The human mind was created for that function. And things of sense were no less the work of God than spiritual things. Here also piety called men to understand. There were practical limits to knowledge, but none in principle.[1]

Augustine's brief passage through scepticism was of no small importance in his formation. Unlike Manichæism, it contributed something positive and permanent. But incomparably more important was the next influence under which he came. It was not to the faith of a Christian that he turned from scepticism. The grip that Christianity had upon him must not be ignored; but, while holding him, it did not satisfy him. There is in the Confessions a flashing phrase which possibly gave birth to Francis Thompson's 'Hound of Heaven.' He addresses God: 'Tu inminens dorso fugitiuorum tuorum.'[2] A consciousness of God drove him from the Academy, but not yet into the arms of the Church. Christianity as he knew it, as then presented in the Latin tongue, was perhaps too unsystematic to satisfy his craving for ordered truth. I have quoted the account which he gave to his friend Honoratus of his passage from scepticism; elsewhere he tells more. At Milan, a man whom he unkindly describes as 'inmanissimo tyfo turgidum' brought to his notice 'quosdam Platonicorum libros.'[3] It was a case of love at first sight. Augustine became a Platonist.

[1] *In Ps.* xlii.; *In Ioan.* 53. *Supra*, p. 12.
[2] *Confess.* iv. 4. [3] *Ibid.* vii. 9.

What did he know of Plato and Platonics? That question brings up the further question of his knowledge of Greek. He tells us how he loathed it as a boy; he learnt enough of it under the ferule to be able to correct the mistakes of others, and this he was rather fond of doing, but it is doubtful whether he could read a Greek book without labour and weariness. He read the *Timaeus* in Cicero's translation.[1] He quotes five or six of the other Dialogues. The books that he read at Milan were translated into Latin by Victorinus, who, as Augustine afterwards learnt, had been a convert late in life to Christianity.[2] What were they? He does not name them; but there is no doubt that they were the Enneads of Plotinus. He says expressly in one place that the Platonics are those more recent philosophers who would not call themselves Peripatetics or Academics, and he names as the most distinguished of them Plotinus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Appuleius.[3] It was upon the Neoplatonism of Plotinus that Augustine lighted.

It never ceased to influence him. It gave to whole tracts of his thought their lasting form. In the passage which I last quoted from the Dialogue *Contra Academicos*, he says that he confidently expected to find in the Platonics materials, consonant with the Christian faith, for that rational apprehension of the truth after which he was thirsting. In later years this enthusiasm faded, and in the Retractations he found fault with it, but to the end he testified that Plato's near approach to the truth might raise

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xiii. 16.
[2] *Confess.* viii. 2.
[3] *De Ciuit. Dei*, viii. 12.

a question whether he had not drawn from the fount of inspiration.[1] It is while this influence is still fresh upon him that you find him talking with his mother of the access of the soul to God in the very terms of the mystic ascent of Plotinus. There is a characteristic difference, for the philosopher lacks the tense note of personality sounding in the words 'intra in gaudium domini tui;' but the preliminaries are the same. If you say that the Confessions were written ten years later, and the account of that wonderful discourse may owe something to literary artifice, you are only arguing for the permanence of the impression.[2] Augustine himself said that the study of the Platonics brought him to the Christian faith. There is in his story much that bears immediately upon our subject. Apart from the doctrine of the Word, which he found in these books and afterwards found completed in the Gospel, apart from the doctrine of the One, pure and holy, the source of all, which threw him back upon himself to the realization of his own vileness—apart from these dominant doctrines there were other things, of less moment indeed, but still fruitful in the formation of his Christian thought.

He learnt from Plotinus that in all things below God there is an admixture of being and not-being.

[1] *Retract.* i. 1. 'Laus quoque ipsa qua Platonem uel Platonicos seu Academicos philosophos tantum extulit, quantum ipsos impios homines non oportuit, non inmerito mihi displicuit.' *De Ciuit. Dei*, viii. 11. 'Quod et me plurimum adducit ut pene assentiar Platonem illorum librorum expertem non fuisse.'

[2] *Confess.* ix. 10. 'Si cui sileat tumultus carnis, etc.' Plotinus: *Ennead.* v. 1, 2. ἥσυχον δὲ αὐτῇ ἔστω μὴ μόνον τὸ περικείμενον σῶμα καὶ ὁ τοῦ σώματος κλύδων, ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶν τὸ περιέχον. ἥσυχος μὲν γῆ, ἥσυχος δὲ θάλασσα καὶ ἀὴρ καὶ αὐτὸς οὐρανὸς, κ.τ.λ.

God is pure being; these other things are, since they are from Him; at the same time they are not, since they are not what He is. That alone truly is which is immutable. Thought was delivered from the ebb and flow of mere phenomena, and found even in the most transitory things an element of permanence.

Then he learnt that existence is good. All things that are, as being, are good. Things that are in process of corruption are good, in so far as they partake of being. They are not supremely good, for they have no true immutable being, else were they not corruptible; but if they were not in some degree good there would be no sense in saying that they are corrupted. Corruption is a loss of good, *priuatio boni*; but not of all good, else would they cease to be. Thus he found the source of evil.[1]

That is of first-rate importance. His rejection of the Manichæan mythology had left him face to face with this problem of evil: 'quod quaerebam,' he says, 'unde esset.'[2] To have no answer to that question was intolerable, and for that reason alone he would probably have done battle with scepticism. One of his troubles with Christianity was that the doctrine of an omnipotent Creator seemed to make God the author of evil, a monism which was worse than the Manichæan dualism. Plotinus delivered him from that nightmare. There was no substance that was not either God or created by God; but evil was no substance; it was the loss of the goodness which inheres in substance.

This conception of evil is, so far, purely metaphysical. But moral evil, or sin, would easily be

[1] *Confess.* vii. 9–12. [2] *Ibid.* vii. 7.

subsumed under it. Augustine always had a conscience of sin, but of sin as a thing to be resented. He was drawn to Manichæism by the doctrine that sin was inevitable under existing conditions, a fault for which he therefore had no responsibility; he was held to it by the promise of liberation from this necessity when he should escape from connexion with the substance of evil. He now learnt to regard it as a falling away from his own proper and natural good, the cause of which he must find in himself. There was a remedy, to be sought in a return to that goodness from which he had lapsed. But how?

You must not think of Augustine as converted by philosophic reasoning. He speaks rather bitterly of those who could point whither one should go, but could not indicate the way. The first effect of this new reading was not good: 'inflabar scientia,' he says. He thought that, if he had read the Platonics when already an instructed Christian, they might have led him astray. The beatitude of Plotinus to be won by sheer withdrawal from contaminating influences, was not for him.[1] To begin with, his will was weak. He would and he would not. Those were the days when he cried 'Give me chastity and continence, but not just now;' when he replied to the call of holiness, 'Suffer yet awhile.'[2] In the second place, there was an infirmity of the flesh. Christianity meant for Augustine a tremendous renunciation. No half-measures would satisfy him. There were many things to be given up, and one thing in particular. For some reason which eludes inquiry he was persuaded that, in his case, it involved

[1] *Confess.* vii. 120. [2] *Ibid.* viii. 5, 7.

the renunciation of marriage, and complete continence in the celibate state. This seemed to be impossible. You need not imagine him a profligate or a voluptuary. It is probable that he was always temperate in the indulgence of appetite. But renunciation was another matter. The habitually chaste Alypius urged him to adopt the celibate life, as good for philosophic study; he replied that he could not endure it, and he afterwards reproached himself for having thus tempted his friend to a morbid curiosity.[1] When he dismissed the mother of Adeodatus, in view of the marriage arranged by Monnica, he could not put up with the proposed delay, and callously took a temporary mistress.[2] Bear in mind that this was immediately before the crisis of his conversion. His soul was clamouring for the *uita beata* which Plotinus taught him to seek in communion with God, but the way was barred. He embarked on the study of St. Paul's writings, where he found the same conflict described. He could still discuss beatitude in philosophical fashion with his friends at Cassiciacum, but he knew that he must find some other way. St. Paul's doctrine of grace laid hold on him: there was a gift of God. The aspiration after ascent to the One was complemented by the idea of the stooping of the One to meet him. The stories told him by Porticianus of the Egyptian hermits and of the officers of the Court who were moved by their example, broke down his conviction of the impossibility of this thing. If they could make renunciation, why not he? He was ready for the critical and decisive words, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,

[1] *Confess.* vi. 12. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 15.

and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' [1]

I have thought it necessary to follow St. Augustine into the secrets of his spiritual struggle, in order to complete this rapid survey of his formation, but I must conclude by returning to my proper subject. Augustine brought with him into the Christian Church a connected conception of nature as the work of the One God. As such, it partakes of that goodness which is sheer existence. But it was created out of nothing, and has a tendency to return to nothing. That is evil, a merely negative state, a loss of good. To this purely metaphysical conception the intensity of his struggle with sin added a rich moral content, and the note of vivid personality. He applied this conception to the problems of Christian doctrine. It was not drawn from Christian doctrine ; or, if his elementary Christian training had contributed anything to it, the form at least came from another source. It was not easily applied to Christian doctrine ; Augustine, convinced of the truth of both alike, did not hesitate to use some force in effecting the connexion. You often see him struggling with incompatibilities. In one province of the doctrine of sin he was landed in difficulties of his own making, from which he found no escape. This conception of Nature, its problems, its triumphs, and its failures, will be the subject of these lectures.

[1] *Confess.* vii. 21 ; viii. 6, 12.

LECTURE II

THE CONTENT OF THE IDEA

I MUST bespeak your attention to-day for some dry verbalism. It is useless to talk about Nature unless we understand in what sense we are using an equivocal term. We must be careful in dealing with St. Augustine's use of it, for he is not himself verbally consistent. There are in his writings inconsistencies common to all who use the word or its equivalent in various languages, and others which are consequent upon his own special way of thinking.

Take this first. The Manichæans interpreted the conflict of wills in a human soul by the assumption of two warring natures, good and evil; he replied that such opposing purposes were not two only, but many, and on this hypothesis the natures also must be many: 'non iam duae sed plures.'[1] This he considers evidently absurd; but in a different connexion he speaks without hesitation, and constantly, of a plurality of natures.

Take this again. Where there is a distinction to be drawn between physics and ethics, you will find him contrasting *natura* and *uoluntas*: he discusses, for example, the question whether the movement of

[1] *Confess.* viii. 10.

the soul is natural or voluntary.[1] Yet nothing is more integral to his thought than the conception of *uoluntas* as a natural endowment of man, without which human nature would not be what it is. Voluntary movement is therefore a perfectly natural movement for man.

Once more, when you come across a contrast of *natura* and *mores*, some offences being *contra naturam* and others *contra mores hominum*,[2] you will walk warily, reflecting that custom is a natural growth, and you will ask how the distinction can stand. You may then pursue the subject further, and find him saying elsewhere that all faults alike are *contra naturam*.[3] You turn the page, and read of *uitia naturalia*.[4]

There are verbal inconsistencies, therefore, and other less obvious discrepancies which show that the word *natura* is sometimes used with less than its largest content. It is a familiar linguistic difficulty. Indeed you will find in St. Augustine almost the whole range of the common use, not to say the abuse, of the derivative in modern English.

For one use or abuse of the word, however, there was little room in his thought. What is barbarously but conveniently called *natura naturans* disappeared before the intensity of his theism. He had no need to personify nature as a worker, since he saw in nature nothing but the direct work of God. The avoidance

[1] *De Lib. Arbitr.* iii. 1.

[2] *Confess.* iii. 8. *Contra Faustum*, xxii. 47.

[3] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 1. 'Omne autem uitium naturae nocet, ac per hoc contra naturam est.'

[4] *Ibid.* xii. 3. 'Non enim quisquam de uitiis naturalibus sed de uoluntariis poenas luit.'

of this thought was of a piece with his emphatic repudiation of the Stoic pantheism. If there be such a thing as *anima mundi*, he says, it certainly is not what we mean by God.[1] But he could not avoid an occasional lapse into less theistic language. In one place he speaks of nature as the agent by whose working medicine becomes a remedy for sickness; in another he makes nature the giver of qualities or powers to fire and water; qualities which, as a rule, he more accurately calls the *natura* or *uis naturalis* of things, given to them by the Creator.[2] But such lapses into common speech, which are not numerous in his writings, no more indicate a weakening of his fundamental thought than our talk of sunrise implies a concession to the Ptolemaic astronomy.

Another common use of the word he allowed with hesitation for a time, but afterwards rejected. Faustus the Manichæan alleged certain miracles of the gospel as done *contra naturam*. Augustine demurred. In a sense it was true; with a glance at St. Paul's phrase, *παρὰ φύσιν*,[3] he allowed that in a certain fashion of speech the word *natura* stands for the ordinary course of events familiarly known to us. But even so he would not allow an argument to be based on this popular use, and at a later period,

[1] *Retract.* i. 11. 'Hoc sane inconcusse retinendum esse non dubito, Deum nobis non esse istum mundum, siue anima eius ulla siue nulla sit.' It will be seen in *De Immortal. Animae*, 15, how he clung to the conception of *anima mundi*.

[2] *De Genes. ad Lit.* ix. 15. 'Natura id agit interiore motu nobisque occultissimo.' *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 7. 'At hoc esse potius contra naturam uidetur, quae non igni sed aquae dedit salem soluere, torrere autem igni non aquae.'

[3] *Rom.* xi. 24.

as we shall see, he was even less tolerant of it in serious discussion.[1]

We will turn to the more seriously determined uses of the word. You must observe one broad distinction, belonging to the common use of language, which needs careful watching in Augustine. *Natura* sometimes means the whole frame of things—*rerum natura*; at other times it stands for parts of the whole, distinguished by their specific constitution or qualities.

And first, of the *rerum natura*: how does he understand it? Quite alien from his thought is the dualism which sets nature over against God. All that occurs in nature is the work of God, but you are not to think of God as setting up an external order of nature, and then standing apart, directing and controlling it from without. The distinction between God and the works of God remains always clear. The works of God are not God; if there be an *anima mundi*, that also is a creature, and not the creator, nor even a demiurge. But God and the works of God are conceived as being in one continuous order. There is no clear cut distinction of nature and supernature; there is nothing absolutely supernatural. Nature includes all that exists. Augustine speaks

[1] *Contra Faustum*, xxvi. 3. 'Dici autem humano more contra naturam esse quod est contra naturae usum mortalibus notum nec nos negamus. . . . Contra naturam non incongrue dicimus aliquid Deum facere, quod facit contra id quod nouimus in natura. Hanc enim etiam adpellamus naturam, cognitum nobis cursum solitumque naturae, contra quem Deus cum aliquid facit magnalia uel mirabilia nominantur. Contra illam uero summam naturae legem, a notitia remotam siue impiorum siue adhuc infirmorum, tam Deus nullo modo facit quam contra se ipsum non facit.' Cf. *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 8. *Infra*, pp. 76 *seqq*.

freely of *natura Dei*, or in metaphysical terms of the *natura quae summe est*, or, in his more Platonizing mood, of that *quae summum atque incommutabile bonum est*.[1] Is this a case of using the same word for disparate ideas? No; you must not separate this nature of God by an impassable chasm from the nature of God's works. Augustine argues in his treatise *De Anima* that the human soul is not *pars Dei* or *eiusdem naturae*,[2] but he is here using the word in its second sense, to which we will come presently; the human soul is of another nature than God just as it is of another nature than the soul of a dog. But God and man, man and dog, are in the same system. There is an *ordo naturarum*, continuous 'ab eo quod summe est ad id quod minus est.'[3]

This continuous *ordo* is the *rerum natura*. If you ask in what it consists, you will find a continuous sequence of natural causes: 'naturalium causarum ordo.'[4] Can it be known as such? In the Enchiridion Augustine deprecates a curious investigation of the *rerum natura*, or the study of physics, on the ground that for a Christian it is sufficient to acknowledge in the goodness of the Creator the cause of all created things.[5] This scientific pessimism had grown upon him in his old age, but even then he was not agnostic in principle. In the more philosophic mood of his treatise *De Trinitate* he had been able to express

[1] *De Util. Cred.* p. 18. *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 2, 6. *Contra Iulian.* i. 8.

[2] *De Anima*, ii. 3. Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* v. 1, 2. φύσις οὖσα ἑτέρα ὧν κοσμεῖ καὶ ὧν κινεῖ καὶ ἃ ζῆν ποιεῖ.

[3] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 8. [4] *Ibid.* xiv. 11.

[5] *Enchir.* 9. *Supra*, p. 12.

admiration of the investigators of such secrets, who follow even extraordinary events at which most men stand agape and track them to their true place in the natural order. The task is very difficult, perhaps waste of time, but not impossible.[1]

There is, then, a *cursus naturae*. To the use of this phrase Augustine is pretty constant. The course of nature is knowable, but imperfectly. When it is important to distinguish what is more or less familiar, he speaks of *naturae usitatissimus cursus*. This implies the existence of another sequence of causes, which is not the less natural and orderly because it is manifest only at comparatively rare intervals. The two sequences must not be kept in separate compartments; they are to be conceived as interpenetrating one another in all the phenomena of the world. There is no hard and fast limit, for scientific investigation may transfer a cause and effect from one side of the distinction to the other, and men cease to marvel at what is so explored.[2] Augustine tells us how he shuddered when he first saw a magnet draw to itself fragments of iron, but he was soon able to place it in the customary course of nature.[3] The distinction is only that of the known and the unknown, the usual and the unusual.

But did not Augustine leave a whole group of causes and effects permanently on the side of the unknown? In the ninth book *De Genesi*, he distinguishes two modes of the working of God's providence, the creative and the administrative.[4] The work of creation—and bear in mind that Augustine understood this

[1] *De Trinit.* iii. 2. *Infra*, p. 84. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 4. [4] *De Genes. ad Lit.* ix. 18.

to be a single simultaneous act, *creauit omnia simul*[1]— started the sequence of causes *in rebus* which can be explored; for the work of administration there are certain causes reserved by God *in se ipso absconditae*. As if to show what snares of language are about our feet, Augustine says that things done in this way are effected *non naturali motu rerum sed mirabiliter*; but you must not judge his thought by that lapse. You will judge him more fairly by an earlier passage in the same treatise, where he is confronted with the question how God moves created things. We do not know, he says, how the mind moves the body, and what we do not know in respect of our own acts we cannot hope to know in respect of another's.[2] So the acts of God done in the administration of the world are brought under the same rule as the acts of a man. The secret causes hidden in the divine nature are related to the known causes of created nature. They are properly natural.

There is no room here for the deistic conception of nature constructed, wound up, and set going by the Creator. Equally excluded is the idea of an absolutely transcendental Ruler of the universe. God is conceived at once as the first in a continuous sequence of causes, and as acting immediately within the resultant system of phenomena. On the other hand, a merely immanental divinity is no less out of question. To attain to the knowledge of the immutable substance of God, he says, is to pass beyond the confines of this changing universe of things corporal

[1] *De Genes. ad Lit.* viii. 20. Compare, however, *Epist.* clxvi. 8, where he treats as tenable Jerome's opinion 'quod singulas animas singulis nascentibus etiam modo Deus faciat.'

[2] *Ibid.* viii. 21.

and incorporal, and so to learn that the whole of nature which is not God Himself is made by God.[1] Sometimes this dualism finds crude expression, as when he says that the world is the greatest of visible things and God the greatest of invisible things.[2]

Dualism I call it, and let drop a dangerous word. Wherever there is dichotomy there is incipient dualism, and Augustine loved dichotomy; but you must always look to find his *two* subsumed under *one*. There is a striking example in a passage of the treatise *De Anima* to which I have already referred. 'Omnis natura,' he says, 'uel Deus est, uel ex Deo.' That which is *ex Deo* is either made or not made. That which is not made is either begotten of God or proceeding from God.[3] It is a daring attempt to bring the mystery of the Trinity and the phenomena of the world into a single conception. The word *natura* stands for the idea under which all is subsumed. You will find dualism of this kind everywhere in St. Augustine, but the dualism is never final.

Shall we then speak of his monism? I will do so with caution; a false impression may easily be conveyed. Foreign to his thought is that element of necessity which seems to be involved in monism as commonly understood. If I take the meaning of Plotinus correctly, his thought also was not monistic in this sense. The One and the All are not identical, as they would be if emanation from the One were eternally necessary. In Augustine the distinction is of the clearest. With his strong sense of personality and his frank use of anthropomorphism,

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xi. 1. [2] *Ibid.* 4.
[3] *De Anima*, ii. 3.

he had no difficulty in basing the unity of nature on the one supreme will of the Creator, consciously and continuously exercised. In another connexion we shall have to consider the perplexing element in that unity caused by the presence of created wills; it is sufficient to say here that these are an integral part of the system. The system holds together as the expression of an ever active but immutable will. Nature is not more separable from God than sunshine from the sun. In this sense only you may call St. Augustine's thought monistic.

It is time to turn to his other use of the word *natura*. And first, he is continually compelled to employ it, for the purpose of polemic, in the Manichæan sense. Here it stands for that which is self-existent, co-eternal with other existences. There is no such plurality, he says; it is one of his last words that there is no *aliena natura* which can interfere with the nature that is of God.[1] Over against the nature of God, who is supreme being, there can be no opposed nature, but only sheer non-existence: 'contraria natura non est nisi quae non est.'[2] But his polemic in this connexion was not exclusively directed against Manichæans. Others among his beloved Platonics thought of a nature, formless but self-existent and eternal, of which, as praejacent material, the world was made. You may look into the popular tract, *De Fide et Symbolo*, to see how peremptorily he could treat this notion. God has made one thing of another, he says—man of the dust of the earth, for example—but this praejacent material was itself created by God; the ultimate term of the series thus begun

[1] *Retract.* i. 15. [2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 2.

is that all things were called into being out of nothing.[1]

The existence of any nature independent of God is thus ruled out of court; but in another sense, plurality of natures and differences of nature are everywhere emphasized, not to say exaggerated, by Augustine. He had no hankering after physical unifications. His attitude was that of a common-sense realism. Things are what they are, and as a rule they are what they seem. They are what they are because they are so made by the constituent will of God. For their specific differences his usual word is *natura*. The nature of a man is different from the nature of a horse; the difference has an ethical value, because the unreasonableness which calls for bit and bridle is natural to the one, but is a fault in the other: 'quod equo natura est homini crimen est.'[2] By an easy transition *natura* then comes to mean a class of individuals distinguished by common qualities: 'naturae quae corrumpi possunt'[3] are marked off by the capacity for going to pieces, or of sinking, as he would say, towards the nothingness out of which they were called. Sometimes, indeed, he prefers the word *species*, as in the characteristic assertion: 'Species ipsas Deus fecit, non priuationes.'[4] He has in mind his dominating thought that evil is but the loss of natural good, and you see that *species* and *natura* are interchangeable terms.

Here, however, we may detect a subtle shifting of the word. There would be no point in using either term for designating an object merely as an object. Yet Augustine sometimes comes near to

[1] *De Fide et Symbolo*, 2; *infra*, p. 105.
[2] *In Ps.* ciii. 4.
[3] *Contra Ep. Fundamenti*, 36.
[4] *De Genes. Imperf.* 5.

such use. *Natura* shares with *substantia* the ambiguity of application alike to the general and to the particular. These terms also are interchangeable. I will give you three examples, taken from different periods. In the early dialogue *De Libero Arbitrio* he says expressly, 'Naturam uoco quae et substantia dici solet.'[1] In a popular exposition of the evil of falsehood he writes: 'Ne quis putet aliquam substantiam uel naturam ueritati esse contrariam.'[2] In the antipelagian treatise *Contra Iulianum* you may read: 'Natura est ipsa substantia et bonitatis et malitiae capax.'[3] The confusion caused by the ambiguity of the word *substantia* is well known, and the same difficulty occurs at times in Augustine's use of the word *natura*. It is aggravated by his fondness for epigram. There is an evident straining after effect in the sentence: 'Uitium ita contra naturam est ut non possit nisi nocere naturae.'[4] This can only mean that a vice injures an individual existing in nature because it is a disturbance of the order of nature. Such an use of the word would be impossible if it were not habitually employed for the distinction of objects, not merely as objects, but by their qualities.

We are remitted, therefore, to the consideration of these qualities. We must be careful to approach them on the right side. They are not to be thought of as constituting this or that nature; the will of God is the only constituent power, and by the same will these qualities are imposed on things when created. Things are what they are *suae determinatione naturae*,

[1] *De Lib. Arbitr.* iii. 13.
[2] *In Ps.* v.
[3] *Contra Iulianum*, i. 8.
[4] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xi. 17.

and the will of the Creator is the determinant. He can put it even more peremptorily: 'Uoluntas conditoris conditae rei cuiusque natura est.'[1] Then are natures fixed? In the ordinary course of nature, yes; but Augustine will tell you that the will of God is not exhausted in the act of creation. Changes of nature, the most portentous, are to be referred to the same cause. As he says elsewhere, certain seminal principles were implanted in things whereby they should in the course of nature become what they were to be, but the results can be varied by the continuing operation of the will of God.[2]

This postulate seemed to Augustine so obvious that he could use it with perfect simplicity in argument against those who questioned the possibility of the resurrection of the body and of the fire of eternal judgment. It is well known, he says, that extraordinary things do occur: what do these people say of them? Agrigentine salt, for example, melts in fire and crackles in water, reversing the usual behaviour of salt in the ordinary course of nature: what do they say to this? They say that it is the nature of this particular kind of salt so to do. A short answer, and sufficient, he allows. Well then, since God is the author of all natures, why should we be expected to give a better reason for the marvels which we believe. It is the will of Almighty God: that is enough. It is the will of God that quicklime should boil in water and be cold in oil, that straw should keep ice from melting and warm apples to their ripening, that hard and beautiful wood should turn

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 8.
[2] *De Genes. ad Lit.* ix. 17; *infra*, p. 89.

into ugly and fragile charcoal, and at the same time, wonderful to relate, should become incorruptible instead of corruptible. It is the will of God: what more can be said to account for anything?[1]

You are not to infer from this that Augustine lived in fairyland, in an irrational universe where anything might happen. He did not understand by the will of God a whimsical indetermination. He believed in the fixity of the course of nature, the inevitable sequence of cause and effect. It was his business to proclaim in a Christian sense that Oneness of God which he had learnt of the Platonics, and Oneness implied an immutable fixity of purpose. But it was no undifferentiated unity, no mere negation of multiplicity. The Unity of God means infinite richness of content, excluding nothing; therefore the works by which God is known are infinitely various; we know a small part of them as sequence of cause and effect; the rest we may refer by unknown sequences to Him as the First Cause.

I have stepped aside from my immediate subject. Resuming, I would say that for the mind of St. Augustine those qualities of created things which he calls natures are ordinarily fixed and necessary. 'Creatoris uoluntas,' he says, 'rerum necessitas est.' But this must be taken with some qualification. It is in the nature of a young man to grow old. But what if he die before old age is reached? That, says Augustine, is the effect of another set of causes, either worked into the texture of the world or reserved in the will of God.[2] Either event is equally natural

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 7. What *agrigentinus sal* may be I confess I do not know.

[2] *De Genes. ad Lit.* vi. 15–16.

and inevitable. There is no such thing as chance. Already in his earliest writings he had suggested that when we speak of chance we are merely confessing our ignorance of causes.[1] Only in this sense is it a chance whether the young grow old or not. That result will inevitably follow from natural qualities, unless the course of things be complicated by other causes, working in a like inevitable order. That which happens in any case is the effect of an immense multiplicity of causes, few of which are open to our investigation, but all are assumed as working in flawless order. If on the one hand Augustine rejected the Stoic doctrine of predestination, he condemned on the other hand, even more vehemently than the Stoics themselves, Cicero's denial of a determined sequence of causes.[2] There are some tremendous consequences that will have to be faced. Things are not merely what they are, beasts are not merely what they are, men are not merely what they are, by reason of the nature given to them; but also their actions, in so far as they are capable of action, are determined by that nature, except as modified by the influence of causes, external to themselves, which run up ultimately to the will of God.

To put it so is to make it seem that Augustine's conception of nature, under God, was purely determinist. But then comes in the great complication. What of the books *de libero arbitrio*, which were the

[1] *Contra Acad.* i. 1. 'Fortasse quae uulgo fortuna nominatur occulto quodam ordine regitur, nihilque aliud in rebus casum uocamus nisi cuius ratio et causa secreta est.'

[2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, v. 9. 'Quod uero negat ordinem omnium causarum esse certissimum et Dei praescientiae notissimum, plus eum quam Stoici detestamur.'

first-fruits of his official Christian teaching? What of the insistence on the human will, its working and its effects, with which he perpetually assailed the ethical determinism of the Manichæans? What of the unfaltering, if unsuccessful, endeavour of his later years to achieve in controversy with the Pelagians a just synthesis of the sovranty of grace and that human freedom without which morality and sin have no meaning? Here would be the place to enter on this subject. But I am not going to tackle it at the end of a lecture. It must be postponed, even though I have in the meantime to pass on to aspects of nature which depend in part on the working of this disputed force. This only I will say, to keep myself in line. Augustine thinks of the human will as an integral part of human nature. Without it man would not be man. It is one of the endowments, given him by the Creator, without which he would not be what he is. This being so, the action of the human will is a part of the whole course of nature; it comes into a sequence of causes, a sequence on the one side among the most obscure, on the other side perhaps the most completely explored of all that we can investigate. The action of the will is therefore natural action, and yet it differs so much from all other natural activities that, as we have seen, Augustine could, at some expense of accuracy, distinguish between voluntary and natural movements.[1] Natural motions are here those with the determination of which the human will has little or nothing to do; to-day, I suppose, we should call them automatic, though that ill-used word would be used far more

[1] *Supra*, p. 27.

appropriately where there is conscious self-determination. For the present, I assume the existence of this faculty of will, and go on to complete in other respects my survey of nature as seen through the eyes of St. Augustine.

Since all created things are called out of nothing by the will of God, and only by the continual operation of the same will are sustained in that kind of existence which is proper to them, it follows that they have a tendency to return to nothing; should the sustaining will be withdrawn, they lapse into not-being. And since it is good to be, or in any measure to share that existence which is found supremely and perfectly in God, it follows that to cease to be must in some sort be an evil.[1] So much Augustine learnt from his Platonics. But in one respect he would not follow them. Plotinus conceived creation in the terms of a cold and impersonal emanation from the One, becoming more and more remote from the source, and therefore tending inevitably to extinction. In his cosmological scheme he placed sensible matter at the outer verge of being, where it trembled on the brink of the abyss of nothingness. It was as light fades away in distance.[2] To be implicated with matter was therefore a misfortune, an evil, for spiritual beings.[3] Augustine's experience of Manichæism was sufficient to put him on his guard against such conclusions; his conception of creative will and of the divine providence made them impossible.

[1] *Confess.* vii. 12. [2] *Ennead.* ii. 4, 5; iv. 3, 9.

[3] *Ibid.* iv. 8, 4. Εἴληπται οὖν πεσοῦσα καὶ πρὸς τῷ δεσμῷ οὖσα καὶ τῇ αἰσθήσει ἐνεργοῦσα διὰ τὸ κωλύεσθαι τῷ νῷ ἐνεργεῖν καταρχάς, τεθάφθαι τε λέγεται καὶ ἐν σπηλαίῳ εἶναι.

It is important to note this limitation of Augustine's Platonism. I doubt whether he was quite aware of it himself. He seems to have read so much of his own into Plotinus that he supposed himself to be still following his guide when diverging. It is difficult to ascertain what θεὸς meant for Plotinus; the conception of godhead is shot through the web of his thought with baffling irrelevance; but it is probable that Augustine took it without hesitation in the sense of his own bold anthropomorphism. Personal will was for him the most real thing in the universe, and the source of all subordinate reality. Much that is persistently vague in his teacher thus became clear cut in his own thought, and the consequences are important. The clear cut may be no more true than the vague, but it is incomparably more religious. For that very reason it induces peril of idolatry. Augustine himself, for all his strong conviction that the sensible world was an imperfect copy of the intelligible, may not have kept himself always aware that his boldly outlined images of the unseen were but images; and some of his disciples seem to have had no suspicion of it. The risk was worth running. There may be safety in a vast vagueness, but there is not much vitality.

The difference that I am noting is not the distinction of immanence and transcendence. Neither Plotinus nor Augustine was baffled by that Scylla-Charybdis of theology. Nothing can be more clearly marked than the contrast of ἐκεῖ and ἐνταῦθα in Plotinus, and Augustine followed him without difficulty; yet for both alike there was a continuity of Here and Beyond that made a brusque transcendent-

ism nonsense. But there is a difference. You may say that Augustine transferred to the Heaven of Heavens much of what Plotinus would reckon to be of the earth, earthy. I think you may be nearer the mark if you draw two different plans of the *continuum*. For Plotinus, ἐκεῖ is central, ἐνταῦθα peripheral; for Augustine, *hic mundus*, the world of human experience, is central, the other world is peripheral and all-embracing. This figure brings me back to the point. We were considering Augustine's refusal to follow his guides to the conclusion that union with body is a misfortune for spirit. It is not the body, he constantly insisted, but the corruptibility of the body, which presses down the soul. He appealed audaciously from the Platonics to Plato, to the myth of the created gods in the Timaeus, bringing their promised immortality and indissolubility into forced comparison with the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body.[1] But he had better standing ground than these ingenuities. He steeped himself in the healthy naturalism of the Hebrew Psalms. Here he found the Lord rejoicing in his works. That joy reaches to the utmost bounds of creation. If men puff themselves up mountain-high in a false spirituality, let them reflect, he says, that a sparrow is winged and feathered by the care of God.[2]

Yet there is the fact that all corporal things are mutable and have a tendency to annihilation. But Augustine refused to see any fault in this mutability.

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xiii. 16.

[2] *In Ps.* x. 'Si uos montes esse dicitis per superbiam, oportet quidem esse passerem pennatum uirtutibus et praeceptis Dei.'

It is interesting to observe that his confidence in the order and completeness of the world brought him into remarkably close touch with some undiscovered principles of physics. It was enough for him that God had created material things in this condition of flux and variation, but as usual he tried to rationalise his belief, and as a consequence he seems to have come near to grasping the principle of the conservation of energy. At the end of his argument against the Manichæan *Epistula Fundamenti* he sets out his conception of these changes. Things pass away, but not into utter nothingness. Speech affords an illustration. A word spoken is gone ; it drops into silence, which is the mere negation of sound ; and yet a whole sentence is produced by a succession of vanishing syllables. So, too, the whole beauty of the world is made up of transitory things ; it stands in birth and death.[1] He returned to this thought when writing *De Ciuitate Dei.* Everything in its proper natural order retains the measure of being assigned to it ; things to which a temporary being is assigned move towards that end which the plan of the universe requires : 'in eum exitum quem ratio gubernandae uniuersitatis includit ;' therefore, even when they perish, they pass away only

[1] *Contra Ep. Fund.* 41. 'Nam et species uocis emissae praeterit et silentio premitur, et tamen sermo noster ex praetereuntium uerborum decessione ac successione peragitur, et moderatis silentiorum interuallis decenter suauiterque distinguitur. Ita sese habet etiam temporalium naturarum infima pulcritudo, ut rerum transitu peragatur et distinguatur morte nascentium. Cuius pulcritudinis ordinem et modos si posset capere sensus noster atque memoria, ita nobis placeret ut defectus quibus distinguitur nec corruptiones uocare auderemus.' *Infra,* 110.

in such sort that something else consequently and meetly comes into existence.[1]

So St. Augustine satisfied himself about the transitoriness of mundane things. He looked at the world as a whole, and found it fair. It was like a picture, the beauty of which is made up of light and shade.[2] The African hardness, which I have ventured to ascribe to him, possibly helped to deliver him for good or for evil from the sentiment which makes the world seem to some minds unendurable. 'Nature red in tooth and claw' gave him no more trouble than the lions roaring after their prey gave to the Hebrew poet. He dismissed such anxieties with something like contempt. Pain was but evidence of the movement towards good which is in the world.[3] I am not attributing to Augustine any originality. The image of the picture in light and shade is one of his borrowings from Plotinus, who taught him the unreasonableness of expecting all things in the world to be alike good, or conversely of making a lesser good positively evil.[4] But if not

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 5.

[2] *Ibid.* xi. 23. 'Sicut pictura cum colore nigro loco suo posito, ita uniuersitas rerum, si quis possit intueri, etiam cum peccatoribus pulcra est.' So Plotinus, *Ennead.* iii. 2, 11.

[3] *De Lib. Arb.* iii. 22. 'Dolor autem quem bestiae sentiunt animarum etiam bestialium uim quamdam in suo genere mirabilem laudabilemque commendat. Hoc ipso enim satis apparet in regendis animandisque suis corporibus quam sint appetentes unitatis. Quid est enim aliud dolor nisi quidam sensus diuisionis uel corruptionis impatiens?'

[4] *Ennead.* ii. 9, 13. καὶ οὐκ ἀπαιτητέον πάλιν ἀγαθοὺς πάντας, οὐδ' ὅτι μὴ τοῦτο δυνατὸν μέμφεσθαι προχείρως πάλιν ἀξιοῦσι μηδὲν διαφέρειν ταῦτα ἐκείνων, τό τε κακὸν μὴ νομίζειν ἄλλο τι ἢ τὸ ἐνδεέστερον εἰς φρόνησιν καὶ ἔλαττον ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἀεὶ πρὸς τὸ σμικρότερον. A difficult and probably defective text, the essential meaning of which I hope I have seized.

original, this confidence in the good ordering of the world acquired a new robustness from his conception of will.

Human misery, however, was another story. He was not an unmitigated optimist. He was not like Emerson, taken by Carlyle to view the squalor of Shoreditch, and saying contentedly that it had its place in the great scheme of things. He had battled with sin, and come off scarred. The stress of this conflict was in part, no doubt, responsible for that complete predominance of the ethical element in his thought which made him unwilling to include *uitia naturalia* among evil things. There is a real remoteness from God, but it is a moral remoteness only, and is unnatural.[1] Nature is thus vitiated. I reserve this moral corruption of nature for separate treatment, noting only these points for the completion of my present task. This kind of vice darkens and weakens what is good in nature, which nevertheless remains good in so far as it is natural.[2] In one of his vivid comparisons he likens vitiated nature to the state of a man trying to walk with broken legs.[3] That condition is penal, and therefore is part of the good and righteous ordering of the world;[4] it is

[1] *De Lib. Arb.* ii. 14. 'Ueritatem autem atque sapientiam nemo amittit inuitus; non enim locis separari ab ea quisquam potest, sed ea quae dicitur a ueritate et sapientia separatio peruersa uoluntas est qua inferiora diliguntur.'

[2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 3. 'Naturae illae quae ex malae uoluntatis uitio uitiatae sunt, in quantum uitiatae sunt, malae sunt: in quantum autem naturae sunt, bonae sunt.'

[3] *De Natura et Gratia*, 49.

[4] *De Natura Boni*, 37. 'Recte ordinans in poenis qui se peruerse ordinauerunt in peccatis.'

therefore in a secondary sense natural;[1] man is brought to this misery by his own habit, not by nature—'non natura sed consuetudine'—but this *consuetudo* becomes a kind of nature. 'Natura nobis facta est poena.' For this reason alone St. Paul could say that men are by nature children of wrath.[2]

Let us conclude. In his introduction to the *Timæus*, Jowett attributes the obscurity of that dialogue to 'the desire to conceive the whole of nature without any adequate knowledge of the parts.' He laments this weakness of the ancient philosophers, but excuses it on the ground that 'before men could observe the world they must be able to conceive the world.' The judgment is characteristic of its time—forty years ago. At the present day we are perhaps less complacent in our judgment of the ancients. We find this fault in most philosophies. It is certainly in Hegel. And then we may begin to doubt whether it is a fault, whether the excuse put forward is not the rule for all philosophy. We are not so confident about our knowledge of the parts. The more we learn, the more there is to learn. We see that a synthesis of the parts, made even forty years ago, would have been defective, and we are afraid that if we make one now it may after all be only partial. If we must have a conception of the whole, it has to be sought some other way. St. Augustine sought it. We know incomparably more of physics and physiology than he did; we may be inclined to think

[1] *De Lib. Arb.* iii. 19. 'Ipsam naturam aliter dicimus, cum proprie loquimur, naturam hominis in qua primum in suo genere inculpabilis factus est, aliter istam in qua ex illius damnati poena et mortales et ignari et carni subditi nascimur.'

[2] *De Fide et Symbolo*, 11. *In Ps.* xxxvii.

that we know more of psychology, since we have invented a name for that science; but it is not clear that our knowledge will be more successful than his ignorance in attaining to a conception of the whole. He passed by physics, of which he was very curious but knew little, to attempt an ethical construction of the world. In this he improved on his masters; he was sometimes nearer to Plato than Plotinus himself. But he improved even on Plato, by putting the whole stress upon Will. If once or twice he wavered in the Platonic direction, as if confusing moral evil with ignorance, it was only for a moment.[1] He was taught to put the stress on Will, partly by his own experience, partly by the wholesome anthropomorphism of the Hebrew and the Christian religion. I will pluck another flower from Jowett's introduction:—'The Platonic compared with the Jewish description of the process of creation has less of freedom or spontaneity; the Creator in Plato is still subject to a remnant of necessity which he cannot wholly overcome.' Augustine found no necessity in creation, but abounding Will, spontaneous, free; thence a world that is at once rational and moral: that is to say, the world of our experience.

[1] *De Util. Cred.* 12. 'Sapientes uoco, non cordatos et ingeniosos homines, sed eos quibus inest, quanta inesse homini potest, ipsius hominis Deique firmissime percepta cognitio, atque huic cognitioni uita moresque congruentes. . . . Solus igitur sapiens non peccat.'

LECTURE III

HUMAN WILL AND FREEDOM

I SHALL consider in this lecture the place of created will in the order of nature as conceived by St. Augustine. We must remember that he did not set man, as a free agent, on a solitary pinnacle; he spoke as positively of angelic wills as of human. It is needless for our present purpose to raise any question about this exploration of a less familiar field. Will, free choice of action, is our subject, in whatever kind of nature it is found or assumed, but we shall study it best in man.

Augustine approached this subject on the ethical side. He seems to have been interested hardly at all in its physical or purely psychological aspect. He explains in the Retractions that he wrote the treatise *De Libero Arbitrio* to meet the necessitarian conception of sin which was, in his judgment, the worst feature of Manichæism. That is evident, indeed, from the treatise itself, and one finds nothing elsewhere in his writings to indicate a more detached interest. If ethics were always predominant in his philosophy, the predominance is nowhere so marked as here.

It is possible, however, to separate the strands of

his argument, and it will be convenient to do so. In this lecture I shall try as far as possible to prescind the ethical interest, and to ascertain what was at the back of Augustine's mind. How did he place human freedom cosmically, in the order of nature? We shall in this way avoid one difficulty: we can for the present steer clear of his amazing paradox that the most perfect liberty is *non posse peccare*. There is no lack of other difficulties. Augustine seems at times to have tackled the most intractable of all questions almost with a light heart, and certainly with a confidence which few serious thinkers have imitated; but problems which he had solved to his own satisfaction were pressed upon him anew by others, and he found that he could no more escape from them than the world has done since his time.

Augustine approached the human will as a reality self-evident, and to be accepted on the basis of common sense. He puts the question bluntly in the dialogue *De Libero Arbitrio*: 'Is there such a thing as a will of our own?' Evodius answers with an affected scepticism, 'I do not know.' The retort is, 'Do you wish to know?' The English distinction of *wish* and *will* disguises the thrust. For the purpose of the argument the distinction is invalid. The faintest wish is a choice of one thing rather than another; the strongest will is but the same kind of choice intensified into a resolution of endeavour. 'Uisne hoc scire?' To say 'yes,' is to acknowledge the existence of *uoluntas*. Evodius still plays the sceptic, and replies, 'I do not know that either.' Augustine turns on him roughly: 'Then ask me nothing more. It is useless to answer one who does not wish for

information. And besides, you cannot be my friend unless you wish me well.' The force of common speech prevails, and Evodius confesses, 'Negari non potest nos habere uoluntatem.'[1]

That is legitimate reasoning. There is no getting away from the fact that I do at times choose one thing rather than another. I can distinguish my own voluntary actions from actions which are involuntary, and the distinction is not vitiated because there are some actions on the border line about which my judgment may be mistaken. 'Sentimus et nouimus,' says Augustine, we perceive and know that some things are not done by us unless we choose to do them.[2] Nothing is better known to us, he says elsewhere, than our own will, for I should not know that I wish for a thing if I did not know what will is.[3] There is some playing with words here. Augustine seems to have supposed that in the passage from verb to substantive, from *uelle* to *uoluntas*, there was a real advance of thought. But for his argument *uelle* suffices.

The testimony of bare consciousness is reinforced by that of the moral sense. For Augustine there was no escape from the fact of sin, or from the condemnation of sin by the conscience. But how can a man be condemned if he is not a free agent? The necessary, inevitable sin of which the Manichæans talked could not rightly be called sin at all. It would have no implication of guilt. This argument is so constant with him that citation is hardly needed,

[1] *De Lib. Arb.* i. 12. [2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, v. 9.

[3] *De Duabus Animabus*, 10. 'Nobis autem uoluntas nostra notissima est; neque enim scirem me uelle si quid sit uoluntas ipsa nescirem.'

but take this from the tract *De Uera Religione*: 'Sin is so entirely a voluntary evil that an act is not sin at all if it be not voluntary.' [1] I choose this because of the way in which he guards the statement in the Retractions. We can speak of involuntary sins, he there says, which are committed in ignorance or under stress of temptation, 'quia uel a nescientibus uel a coactis perpetrantur;' but there is always some element of will in such actions; the ignorant man makes an ignorant judgment, and he who under stress of concupiscence does the thing he would not yields with some measure of willingness to his appetite.[2] That is important, for it shows Augustine with his finally matured judgment defending some remnant of freedom even in those whom he would reckon most enslaved.

This will remind us also of his own explanation that in writing *de libero arbitrio* he had in view human nature as created in its original integrity. This was not an afterthought, forced upon him by the Pelagian controversy; it is in the dialogue itself: 'Cum de libera uoluntate recte faciendi loquimur, de illa scilicet in qua homo factus est loquimur.' [3] Human nature is vitiated; that is a cardinal point of doctrine which Augustine never allowed himself to forget. The corruption of human nature involves some loss of freedom. All that we shall have to consider later; but some degree of freedom is so essential to the constitution of human nature that, if all were lost, man would cease to be man. Though our soul be

[1] *De Uer. Rel.* 14. 'Usque adeo peccatum uoluntarium est malum, ut nullo modo sit peccatum si non sit uoluntarium.'

[2] *Retract.* i. 13.

[3] *De Lib. Arb.* iii. 18.

weakened by sin, he says, it is yet on a loftier plane of being than the light of the sun. Even a vicious horse is better than a stone; so he who sins by free will is more excellent than a creature which does not sin for lack of freedom; the worst drunkard is a nobler being than the good wine which he drinks to his own hurt.[1]

So Augustine treats the will as an indestructible element in human nature. As such, it has a fixed place in the *cursus naturae*. What is that place? What is the relation of will to the other forces of nature?

The worst defect in St. Augustine's treatment of the subject is the inadequacy of his consideration of the motives on which the determination of the will turns. We must pick our words carefully here. We must not speak of the will being determined by motives, however dominant, for it is the capital principle of his thought that man is ultimately self-determining; but self-determination means judgment, and this judgment is always exercised upon motives. In his later years he was concerned to maintain the sovranty of divine justice and divine grace; he held it impious folly to deny that God can at pleasure turn to a good purpose the evil wills of men.[2] It is this consideration that gives us a familiar phrase about the power of God to order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. But you must not take this to mean the forcing of the will itself to become good. If *mala uoluntas* were so forced, it would cease to be *uoluntas*. It is the power to con-

[1] *De Lib. Arb.* iii. 5.

[2] *Enchir.* 25. 'Quis porro tam impie desipiat ut dicat Deum malas hominum uoluntates, quas uoluerit, quando uoluerit, ubi uoluerit, in bonum non posse conuertere?'

trol events that is in question. Freedom of the will, *liberum arbitrium*, is one thing: freedom of achievement is another thing. There is much more than such beneficial ordering in the work of grace, as understood by Augustine; he certainly held that inveterate evil will could not become good will without the help of divine grace, but this was a motive working with other motives, on which human judgment was exercised. In the first stage of his thought he recognized equally inclusive motives of another sort. He was interested only in motives to sin, but from his treatment of them you can deduce a more general conception. He puts the case of a motive too powerful to be resisted; then there is no sin in yielding. If it can be resisted, then to yield is sin. He puts the case of deception: is it possible to guard against this? If so, to let oneself be misled is sin; if not, there is no sin, for there is no truly voluntary act. But sins are unquestionably committed in such cases; therefore it is evident that resistance or caution is possible.[1] The argument is circular, you may say, or at least elliptical; but that is because its orbit is traced round the *foci*, the two fixed points which are the facts of human choice and human sin. Augustine will not allow us to call in question those two facts of human experience. He does sometimes use the language of determinism. 'Quod amplius nos delectat, secundum id operemur necesse est.'[2] So he says in his exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians. The merest hedonist could hardly say more. But an isolated sentence will seldom give you Augustine's mind, and when you

[1] *De Lib. Arbitr.* iii. 18. [2] *Expos. Ep. ad Galatas*, v. 22.

follow the explanation, you will soon find this dominant delectation interpreted, not in the sense of an impact to which the will is passive, but of an energy of love: 'Manifestum est certe secundum id nos uiuere quod sectati fuerimus; sectabimur autem quod dilexerimus.' If the will is necessarily determined by the strongest motive, the supreme strength may be imparted to this motive by an affection which is itself a preference founded in freedom of choice. If that movement, again, is circular, it is because human nature is in fact rounded to itself, and is endowed with a function of originality.

Behind Augustine's investigation of motives, left incomplete because of his contented acquiescence in facts, lies the conviction that will is an ultimate reality. 'Quid opus est quaerere unde iste motus existat?' This movement of the soul 'non est utique naturalis sed uoluntarius.' When we call an act voluntary we are assuming a cause behind which we cannot get to any other cause short of the original will of the Creator. He contrasts with the voluntary movement of a man the natural movement of a stone in falling, which he could hardly have placed more accurately if he had read Newton.[1] Nothing is more clearly in our own power, he says, than the will; and weakly corroborates this strong assertion by observing that as soon as we will a thing, the will is present.[2] What cause can there be of will, he asks, prior to will? It is the root of the whole matter.[3] He said the same thing later, when writing *De Ciuitate Dei*. We must not seek an

[1] *De Lib. Arbitr.* iii. 1. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 3.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 17. 'A radice ista uoluntatis non receditur.'

efficient cause of evil will. He is concerned, of course, to show that there is no natural evil which can cause it; it springs spontaneously from human nature, which is a good thing. He closes the question, after a fashion to which he was too much addicted, with a verbal quip. 'Non enim est efficiens, sed deficiens.'[1] He is thinking of his favourite contention that evil is a loss of good, and not something positive; but why should there not be an efficient cause of a loss? And what is the efficient cause of a good will? The creative will of God? But the creative act produces man, able to choose freely this or that. Whichever he may choose, the power of choice springs equally from creative will. In the *Enchiridion* Augustine will face the consequence squarely, saying that nothing, good or evil, can be done unless the Almighty should will it to be done, either by way of permission or by way of action.[2] What man chooses to do is done by divine permission, with no anterior cause except the gift of the power.

Reviewing his own Manichæan errors, Augustine observed that freedom from compulsion is of the essence of will. He thus arrived at a formal definition, in which ethical complications are for once ignored. 'Uoluntas est animi motus, cogente nullo, ad aliquid uel non amittendum uel adipiscendum.'[3] The motion is therefore spontaneous; so he described it in the height of the Pelagian controversy; sin is 'spontaneus defectus a bono.'[4]

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 7.

[2] *Enchir.* 95. 'Non ergo fit aliquid nisi omnipotens fieri uellet; uel sinendo ut fiat, uel ipse faciendo.'

[3] *De Duabus Animabus*, 10.

[4] *Contra Iulianum*, i. 8. *Infra*, p. 107.

The human will, thus empowered by the Creator, becomes a cause. It is *in causarum ordine*. But we must not place it low down as a link in a continuous chain. It comes into the course of nature direct from the First Cause. It is not a disturbance, because it has its appointed place. But it is a new cause. When brought in, it produces effects for which there is no secondary cause antecedent to itself. The free action of a man has, therefore, a kind of secondary creative power. It is not properly creative, because it cannot call natures into being, but it does produce new qualities in existing natures. You find him saying that in plain terms. 'Tantum ualent uoluntates ut earum naturarum, quarum sunt, faciant qualitates.' [1] If you ask about a man of evil will, 'qualis sit,' the answer must be 'malus.' But he is not bad by reason of his nature or substance, for that is good; he is called bad because of the quality impressed upon him by his will. Evil will does not produce an evil substance, for there is no such thing; but it does produce a real quality in a substance which is otherwise good. Put aside the ethical interest, and it remains that the will is productive. The will of man impresses certain qualities on a quantity of wood—we had better not talk peripatetically of matter and form—and produces something new. Let us accept the truth of common speech: he *makes* a chair. 'There is an angel in this block of marble,' said Michelangelo, 'and I am going to release him.' But the sculptor did more: he made the angel.

It follows that the human will may produce an

[1] *Contra Iulianum*, i. 8.

effect contrary to the will of the Creator. 'But who withstandeth His will?' demands St. Paul, or rather a disputant supposed by St. Paul; and Augustine felt the pressure of the question.[1] He extended the meaning of omnipotence beyond the original significance of the word, and beyond what the Greek word παντοκράτωρ seems able to convey, and so was entangled in a difficulty; but he extricated himself by falling back on the natural sense of universal sovranty. Opposition to God, and even successful opposition, does not mean effective withdrawal from under the sovranty of God. In the first place, it comes within the rule that the will of God controls all things, 'uel sinendo uel faciendo.' But further, Augustine depicts a large scheme of omnipotence, in which with infinite patience God controls the wills of men, bending them to a far-off purpose. God is *ordinator* no less than *creator*; if he is *naturarum bonarum creator*, he is also *malarum uoluntatum ordinator*; if human wills make a bad use of good things, he in turn makes a good use even of evil wills.[2] God has not so ordered nature that a creature endowed with free judgment can overpower the will of the Creator, even though he be able at times to do something contrary to that will. When you sin, he says, do not suppose that something has happened to God against his will, for you are still

[1] See, for example, *Enchir.* 25.

[2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xi. 17. 'Non itaque esset uitium recedere a Deo, nisi naturae cuius id uitium est potius competeret esse cum Deo. Quapropter etiam uoluntas mala grande testimonium est naturae bonae. Sed Deus, sicut naturarum bonarum optimus creator est, ita malarum uoluntatum iustissimus ordinator, ut cum male illae utuntur naturis bonis, ipse bene utatur etiam uoluntatibus malis.'

under his hand and cannot evade his power ; whatever you may choose to do, the Almighty will not lack means for fulfilling his will in you.[1] That he said in popular exposition of a Psalm. In solid argument, *de Ciuitate Dei*, he expounded scriptural sayings about God's repentance, or change of purpose, as to be understood tropically of that imperfect exhibition of the divine purpose which is contained in the known order of natural causes : behind, and out of sight, is the unchanging purpose alike of doing good, of suffering evil, and of bringing ultimate good out of evil. Therefore no man by the exercise of his own will can compel any change in the divine decrees. You must let me read you the passage :—

'Sed quia Deus cuncta praesciuit, et ideo quoque hominem peccaturum ignorare non potuit, secundum id quod praesciuit atque disposuit ciuitatem sanctam debemus adserere, non secundum illud quod in nostram cognitionem peruenire non potuit quia in Dei dispositione non fuit. Neque enim homo peccato suo diuinum potuit perturbare consilium, quasi Deum quod statuerat mutare compulerit ; cum Deus praesciendo utrumque praeuenerit, id est, et homo quem bonum ipse creauit quam malus esset futurus, et quid boni etiam sic de illo esset ipse facturus. Deus enim etsi dicitur statuta mutare—unde tropica locutione in scripturis etiam paenituisse legitur Deum—iuxta id dicitur quod homo

[1] *In Ps.* cx. 'Si peccaueris, non putes hominem fecisse quod uoluit et Deo accidisse quod noluit. Sicut enim uult ut homo non peccet, ita uult peccanti parcere ut reuertatur et uiuat ; ita uult postremo in peccato perseuerantem punire, ut iustitiae potentiam contumax non euadat. Itaque quicquid elegeris omnipotenti non deerit unde suam de te compleat uoluntatem.'

sperauerat uel naturalium causarum ordo gestabat, non iuxta id quod se omnipotens facturum esse praesciuerat.'[1]

I think you will capture Augustine's thought best if you picture man as exposed to a rain of influences so various as more or less to neutralize one another, leaving him in a condition of unstable equilibrium. Other creatures are entirely controlled and moved by natural impulses; they are *in ordine causarum* to such effect that an irresistible current carries them along. Their course can be calculated by an intelligence large enough and acute enough to ascertain either the real causes of their movements or the usual direction of the forces which drive them. The date of an eclipse can be accurately determined by an astronomer. The behaviour of sheep in given circumstances can be predicted pretty certainly by an experienced shepherd. If the constitution of human nature were altogether like that of other creatures, we should be able, by a more difficult and complicated calculation of the same kind, to plan beforehand the actions of men. The skill of the shepherd might be matched in the study of ethics; politics would approximate to an exact science. With sufficient knowledge it would be possible to measure the influences at work in every case, and the sum of the motives acting upon him as forces would give the direction in which a man would go. Man would not ultimately be more unstable than any other creature, animate or inanimate. But if he has a power of choice, originating in himself, he can alter the balance of forces by leaning this way or that in

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xiv. 11.

a manner altogether incalculable. Freedom does not imply the absence of motive; it means that to the multitude of motives pressing on the man from without is added a motive from within strong enough to determine the instability which is the result of their cross currents.

So far I think it is clear that Augustine's conception of nature was large enough to allow room for the play of human will. Freedom does not mean here merely an unlimited capacity for desire; *cupiditas* is not *uoluntas*; will is mockery unless a man is free to act on his own judgment. Freedom of human action is, of course, limited; following his own judgment, man comes up sooner or later against impassable bars. But Augustine would not set bounds of eternal necessity, for he acknowledged no such thing; the restraint is exercised by the living, yielding, controlling will of God; the only *rerum necessitas* is *creatoris uoluntas*.[1] He thus attributes to the system of nature an elasticity which is denied to any purely mechanical scheme.

But there remains an immense question. I ask you to recall that fine argument which I have just now quoted, about the unchanging purpose that brings good out of evil. It fetches me up against a difficulty which we have not yet faced. It was built by Augustine upon a foundation which for the moment I purposely ignored. We must come to it. 'Quia Deus cuncta praesciuit'—that is why Augustine could see an eternal purpose working through all the aberrations of man. And what is involved in foreknowledge?

[1] *De Genes. ad Lit.* vi. 15.

Augustine stumbled on that question from the first. One does not know whether Evodius in the dialogue *De Libero Arbitrio* is a merely conventional interlocutor, or whether his difficulties were actually propounded by Augustine's friend of that name. This is one of them. If God, he asks, has foreknowledge of all things that will be, how can there be any freedom? If God foreknew the sin of man, how could that sin be a work of free will? If God foreknows that a thing will happen, happen it must. How can there be freedom of will where there is this inevitable necessity? [1]

Augustine was not afraid of putting the difficulty strongly. It is a great question, he says, but there is an easy reply. Easy it is; but few readers, I should say, can have found it sufficient. 'Why do you think,' he asks, 'that there is a contradiction between our free choice and the foreknowledge of God? Because it is God's, or because it is foreknowledge?' Evodius elects the former alternative. 'But if you know beforehand that a man will do something,' continues Augustine, 'is he not bound to do it?' 'That is so,' replies Evodius, 'for my knowledge would not be knowledge unless I knew something fixed and assured.' So necessity follows, if at all, on any foreknowledge, not only on that of God. Evodius accepts this, correcting his former statement. 'But you do not compel the man,' says Augustine, 'to do what you know him to be going to do. He certainly will do it, otherwise you could not know, but your foreknowledge does not make him do it. You know that he will do it, but none the less he

[1] *De Libero Arbitrio*, iii. 2.

does it of his own free will. In the same way God does not compel men to do what he foresees them doing.'

You will see at once that Augustine here draws a comparison that will not hold good. He is arguing as if divine knowledge were of exactly the same kind as human knowledge. Five or six years later he had to come to closer quarters with the question. His old friend Simplicianus, now Bishop of Milan, consulted him about the changes of purpose attributed to God. Augustine replied that neither knowledge nor foreknowledge, neither *scientia* nor *praescientia*, can be predicated of God in the strict sense of the words. They are terms of human experience ; knowledge is of things past, foreknowledge is of things future ; but neither past nor future is to be thought of in the eternity of God. Therefore when we speak of God's knowledge, we use the word in a special sense, and a comparison of human and divine knowledge is absurd—*inridenda*.[1] Yes : but then his reply to Evodius goes by the board.

What is this foreknowledge which we attribute to God ? The category of time is improperly introduced, as a concession to human modes of thought. It follows that things which to us are past, present, or future, are to God neither past nor future, nor yet properly present. For by the present we mean that which is now passing, and will in a moment be past. Eternity is existence without relations of time. Then how is it possible to speak of foreknowledge ? The word introduces the relation of futurity which is supposed to be prescinded.

[1] *Ad Simplicianum*, ii. 2.

I would ask you to observe that this conception is not properly Christian. Augustine did not draw it from the Scriptures either of the Old or of the New Testament, or from any ecclesiastical source. When he says that God neither was nor will be, he is Platonising.[1] The Hebrew or Christian way of speaking is rather to say that God was and is and is to come. You may interpret that as a poetical phrase excluding temporal relations, since that which is of all three times is of none in particular; but this will be an afterthought. The foreknowledge implied in the prophecies of the Old Testament is in the proper sense knowledge of the future; it is strictly comparable with human foresight, the calculation of consequences from causes more or less known; it always seems to be contingent; it is capable of being referred to an extraordinary knowledge of causes secretly working towards a definite end, which may nevertheless be frustrated by other causes cutting across them.

You can draw from this source the conception of a course of nature so orderly and regular as to allow a far range of prevision, which shall yet be subject to modification by the free action of the human will. You may assume also factors tending to the determination of the will which so lie open to a sufficiently penetrating intelligence as to allow the prediction of human actions; but even the smallest remnant of free choice, undetermined by external causes, will introduce an inevitable element of contingency.

[1] Plotinus, *Ennead.* iii. 7, 3. ὃ οὖν μήτε ἦν μήτε ἔσται, ἀλλ᾽ ἔστι μόνον, τοῦτο ἑστὼς ἔχον τὸ εἶναι τῷ μὴ μεταβάλλειν εἰς τὸ ἔσται μηδ᾽ αὖ μεταβεβληκέναι ἐστὶν ὁ αἰών.

One can imagine Augustine constructing a scheme of the world on these lines, and making the most of the repentances of God in illustration. Indeed, his doctrine of the economy of grace, where God appears as *ordinator uoluntatum malarum*, loudly demands such a scheme. But he was barred out from this by his acceptance of the Platonic conception of eternity, incongruously interpreted in terms of time, which involved him in the difficulties of absolute foreknowledge.

How absolute he made it, and into what difficulties it brought him, may be seen from his treatment of the case of Hezekiah. The story of the king's sickness, of his predicted death, of his prayer and his recovery, would seem to be a crucial example of the divine repentances and of the contingency of prophecy. What does Augustine make of it? You will find it in the sixth book *De Genesi ad Literam*. A chain of causes was leading Hezekiah to immediate death, but other causes known to God from eternity were prolonging his life for fifteen years; if this was granted in answer to his prayer, it was because God had from eternity foreseen the prayer and the answer. Augustine does not account for the first prophecy of immediate death; he would perhaps refer it to a revelation of the temporal causes working to that end. The most interesting part of the comment is the conclusion: 'What God foreknew was necessarily bound to happen.' *Quod praesciebat necessario futurum erat.*[1]

[1] *De Genes. ad Lit.* vi. 17. 'Secundum quasdam futurorum causas moriturus erat Ezechias, cui Deus addidit quindecim annos ad uitam, id utique faciens quod ante constitutionem

Then what freedom is there? Augustine was continuously wrestling with the problem, sometimes using means that were little more than verbal quibbling. In the fifty-third tract on St. John, he says that God must not be supposed to compel our actions, for He foreknows them as our own, and if they are not really our own, God's foreknowledge is at fault, which is impossible; we freely resolve to do what we will, and our resolution was foreknown.[1] That is merely to state the antinomies of the problem, without any solution. In the fifth book *De Ciuitate Dei* you will find him almost comically angry with Cicero for denying the possibility of divination on the ground of the freedom of the will. To Cicero's contention that foreknowledge is possible only if there be a fixed *ordo causarum*, which excludes voluntary action, he replies that our wills are included 'in causarum ordine qui certus est Deo.' That is true in a large sense, and is involved in his conception of nature; but if it means that our wills are wholly determined by precedent causes—and

mundi se facturum esse praesciebat et in sua uoluntate seruabat. Non ergo id fecit quod futurum non erat; hoc enim magis erat futurum quod se facturum esse praesciebat. Nec tamen illi anni additi recte dicerentur, nisi ad aliquid adderentur quod se aliter in aliis causis habuerat. Secundum aliquas igitur causas inferiores iam uitam finierat; secundum illas autem quae sunt in uoluntate et praescientia Dei, qui ex aeternitate nouerat quid illo tempore facturus erat—et hoc uere futurum erat—tunc erat finiturus uitam quando finiuit uitam; quia etsi oranti concessum est, etiam sic eum oraturum ut tali orationi concedi oporteret ille utique praesciebat, cuius praescientia falli non poterat; et ideo quod praesciebat necessario futurum erat.' I follow the readings of Zycha in C.S.E.L.

[1] *In Ioan.* 153. 'Ipsorum enim praesciuit peccata, non sua, non cuiusquam alterius, sed ipsorum. Quapropter si ea quae ille praesciuit ipsorum non sunt ipsorum, non uere ille praesciuit.

nothing less fits the argument—he is in conflict with his own doctrine of the originality of will. Hard pressed, he falls back on his mastery of phrase. 'Non ergo propterea nihil est in nostra uoluntate quia Deus praesciuit quid futurum esset in nostra uoluntate; non enim qui hoc praesciuit nihil praesciuit.'[1] That is epigram, not argument.

Was there no escape? I think we can see that Augustine, when he wrote the eleventh book of the Confessions, was labouring to find a way out of the difficulty by analysis of the idea of time. Consider his argument with himself on the subject, and his passionate appeal to God for guidance. It was not on a metaphysical subtlety that he so expended himself. He was moved to the depth of his moral being by this problem of reconciliation. What was the divine prescience? How could it stand with human freedom? How could the future be revealed to men, for whom the future does not exist? 'It is beyond me,' he cries; 'I cannot attain unto it; but of Thee I shall have attainment, if Thou give it, dear light of my blinded eyes.'[2] He seems to have felt that a solution was just evading him. He had learnt, probably from Plotinus, to distin-

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, v. 9.

[2] *Confess.* xi. 19. 'Quisnam ille modus est quo doces futura cui futurorum quicquam non est? Uel potius de futuris doces praesentia? Nam quod non est nec doceri utique potest. Nimis longe est modus iste ab acie mea; inualuit ex me, nec potero ad illum; potero autem ex te, cum dederis tu, dulce lumen occultorum oculorum meorum.' I follow Knöll's reading. It would be grammatically simpler to refer *cui futurorum quicquam non est* to God, 'for whom there is no future;' but the context seems to demand a reference to the present non-existence for man of things future.

guish between duration and time, and he could adjust the former conception to the Christian idea of God. He had read in the Psalms, 'Ipsi peribunt, tu autem permanes.' This gave him a phrase. 'Nulla tempora tibi coaeterna sunt,' he says, 'quia tu permanes; at illa, si permanerent, non essent tempora.'[1] He had lifted from Plato the conception of time as a measure inherent in created things; the world was not made in time, but with time.[2] He thought for a while that he could identify it as *distentio ipsius animi*, making it a mere form of perception.[3] Duration and time would then run parallel courses; or rather, time would be a measurement of duration, exclusively proper to human experience. In that case, past and future would have a meaning in respect of duration; they would be a clumsy way of describing, in the terms of our broken experience, its continuous flow; futureness would have some correspondence with reality.

It seems to me that Augustine was feeling his way along these lines when he harped on the commonsense notion that what is future does not yet exist. It cannot therefore be seen. But its causes exist, and may be known; from which it is possible to

[1] *Confess.* xi. 17. Plotinus, *Ennead.* iii. 7, 7. τὸ γὰρ στάσιν ἢ τὸ ἑστηκὸς ἢ στάσεώς τε λέγειν παντάπασι πόρρω τῆς ἐννοίας ἂν εἴη τοῦ χρόνου οὐδαμῇ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὄντος. Time, as a flux of succession, is contrasted with the stability of abiding existence.

[2] *Timaeus*, p. 37. Εἰκὼ δ' ἐπινοεῖ κινητόν τινα αἰῶνος ποιῆσαι, καὶ διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανὸν ποιεῖ μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἑνὶ κατ' ἀριθμὸν ἰοῦσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα, τοῦτον ὃν δὴ χρόνον ὠνομάκαμεν. ἡμέρας γὰρ καὶ νύκτας καὶ μῆνας καὶ ἐνιαυτοὺς οὐκ ὄντας πρὶν οὐρανὸν γενέσθαι, τότε ἅμα ἐκείνῳ ξυνισταμένῳ τὴν γένεσιν αὐτῶν μηχανᾶται. *De Ciuit. Dei*, xi. 6. 'Non est mundus factus in tempore, sed cum tempore.'

[3] *Confess.* xi. 26.

foresee the future. I see the dawn: I predict the sunrise. Is it thus that God reveals the future in prophecy, making known its antecedent causes which now are? Augustine shrank from the question. This also was beyond him.[1]

A tempting conclusion must have danced before his eyes. There was an epigram ready made. It would be quite in his style to say that, since things future do not exist, to know the future is to know nothing. That would be a way of getting rid of this troublesome foreknowledge, without impugning the omniscience of God; for knowledge is of things that are, and knowledge of nothing is not knowledge. His avoidance of this quibble indicates the high seriousness of his inquiry. He was more entirely candid when speaking to himself or to God, as in the Soliloquies and the Confessions, than when disputing with an adversary. But such an epigram might be tolerable even here; it need not be a mere quip. If time is a copy of eternity—a Platonic notion which is not quite so nonsensical as Jowett thought—there is room for comparison. If measured time differs from duration only as the mode of human being differs from the mode of divine being, futurity and the nonentity of future things may have some meaning also for God. Augustine could be boldly anthropomorphic on occasion. Here his boldness deserted him. He realised that for man the present is a

[1] *Confess.* xi. 18. 'Quoquo modo se itaque habeat arcana praesensio futurorum, uideri nisi quod est non potest. Quod autem iam est, non futurum sed praesens est. Cum ergo uideri dicuntur futura, non ipsa, quae nondum sunt, id est quae futura sunt, sed eorum causae uel signa forsitan uidentur, quae iam sunt.'

mere point—the turning-point from past to future.[1] But he held to the incongruous notion that the divine existence can be conceived in terms of an enduring present. He was tied to the arid abstraction which makes eternity nothing else but a point of time, and so a mere negation of time.

That was the cause of his trouble, from which he never escaped. He maintained the freedom of the human will. With complete and ineluctable inconsistency, he maintained the divine foreknowledge in a sense which involved, as he admitted in his more unguarded moments, a necessary determination of the will.

[1] *Confess.* xi. 15. 'Quod tamen ita raptim a futuro in praeteritum transuolat, ut nulla morula extendatur. Nam si extenditur, diuiditur in praeteritum et futurum: praesens autem nullum habet spatium.'

LECTURE IV

MIRACLE

We have seen that, according to the mind of St. Augustine, there is a *cursus naturae*, which may be otherwise described as an *ordo causarum*. In arguing against Cicero's denial of vaticination, he urges the principle that nothing is made or done without an efficient cause preceding. He attributes the divine foreknowledge, in his more tempered treatment of the subject, to the fixity of this order, by reason of which consequences may be reckoned already existent in their antecedents. So far he is in pretty close agreement with most modern thought. We part company from him in respect of the importance which we attach to the investigation of causes. This sort of thing seemed to him mere curiosity, rather puerile, and reprehensible if it should distract the mind from more serious pursuits. It must be admitted that he himself shows in his writings many traces of such curiosity, and the results may be held to justify his condemnation of its indulgence. Much of the investigation that he found possible was indeed futile, and he could not anticipate the triumphs of an unborn science to which even the trivialities of natural history should bring precious materials. But if his

natural history seems to us childish, his natural philosophy was not fundamentally different from our own. It assumed a continuous chain of causality.

Yet there is a difference, perhaps not altogether to St. Augustine's disadvantage. The place that he found for Will in the production of consequences made room for certain facts of experience which seem to wander homeless in some other systems, and in others again are provided for by the elimination of the one thing that is surely known about them. The human will is not for Augustine an intrusive element, at odds with all natural causes; neither, on the other hand, does he attempt violently to bring it into a false co-ordination with them. Will is for him a force in nature, unique, but only as gravitation is unique; and it is included with other forces in the *ordo causarum*. In spite of the convenient distinction between natural and voluntary motion, will is for him an integral part of the *rerum natura*. He does not succeed in establishing a complete continuity, because in the operation of will he recognises an element of comparative originality. However much the determination of will may be controlled by prevenient motives, there is at some point a self-determination which is free. But even this free action of the human spirit is brought within the system by the ultimate reference of all force to the originating will of God the Creator. He is able in this way to get rid of the fortuitous causes[1] which he found to be assumed in Cicero's account of contingency. They can be brought, hypothetically at least, within the ambit of voluntary causes. We

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, v. 9. *Supra*, pp. 39, 66.

are left, therefore, with the single distinction of natural and voluntary causes; but the distinction is merely provisional, for voluntary causes are fundamentally natural, and natural causes also may be described as voluntary, since they spring from the will of God.

The will of God is not whimsical. Before his baptism Augustine spoke doubtfully of the doctrine of chance, suggesting only that what is so called may be the working of ordered causes unknown to us.[1] In later days he had no doubts on this head. Omnipotence does not mean reckless power, but the strength of wisdom.[2] The course of nature is ordered. It is subject to necessity; not the blind necessity of the Stoics, but a law intelligently imposed. 'Creatoris uoluntas rerum necessitas est.'[3] Augustine's conception of the divine foreknowledge constantly reinforces this sense of inevitable order, but apart from that questionable element of his thought, his conception of creation is sufficient to establish the point. He speaks of the laws of nature in a fashion that would almost satisfy the demands of modern science. There is *ratio et causa* even of the most casual occurrences. 'Omnis iste naturae usitatissimus cursus habet quasdam naturales leges suas.'[4] He is sparing in the use of this phrase, but it sometimes falls from his pen so incidentally as to seem clearly familiar. Discussing the years of the antediluvian patriarchs, he remarks as a matter of course that,

[1] *Contra Acad.* i. 1.

[2] *De Genes. ad Lit.* ix. 17. 'Neque enim potentia temeraria sed sapientiae uirtute omnipotens est, et hoc de unaquaque re in tempore suo facit quod ante in ea fecit ut possit.'

[3] *Ibid.* vi. 15.

[4] *De Genes. ad Lit.* ix. 16.

according to a well-known law of nature, a boy cannot procreate children at the age of twelve years.[1]

By a law of nature Augustine probably meant something more congruous to the word than is now usually intended. He had a clear vision of a legislator. But the practical effect is much the same. For this legislator has an unchanging purpose. His laws do not vary, and they bind all creatures. We are not concerned here with a moral law, which free wills may flout, but with laws of causation, which control with equal rigour voluntary and involuntary motions. For Augustine had no illusions about the limits of human action. I can will what I will, but to perform what I will is another matter. Some things are naturally within my power ; I may have a will to do other things, but the will is futile. Our wills can do just so much as God has willed them to be able to do.[2]

Augustine would probably have limited human action much more narrowly than we do. I am not thinking only of the artificial harnessing of the forces of nature which we have achieved. There is something less obvious. We know the material universe as consisting of masses, large and small, which hang in such delicate equilibrium that the slightest movement of the smallest mass affects the position of all the rest. If I walk across the room, I move the sun a measurable distance. And I choose for myself whether I will do this. By a voluntary act I can

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xv. 12. ' Quis potest hac aetate generare usitata ista nobisque notissima lege naturae ? '

[2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, v. 10. ' Nostrae uoluntates tantum ualent quantum Deus eas ualere uoluit.'

move the sun. I think that St. Augustine would have accused me of impiety for making such a claim. However that may be, he certainly dreamt of no power so far-reaching given to man. He set narrower bounds. But whether they be narrow or wide, the point is that his conception of nature involves the setting of such bounds. Man is a free agent within limits. He is not the only free agent. Other wills are to be recognised as operative, no less than the human will. All these work within a scheme, an ordered frame, which is determined by the will of the Creator. And that supreme will works by self-determination through the same order, which is indeed itself. It follows that Augustine's thought allowed no room for any action upon nature from without. No will—of God, of angel, of demon, or of man—could be pictured as a foreign power, intervening in the course of nature. Once more I must note the absence of that distinction of nature and supernature which afterwards invaded theology.

And what, then, of miracle? It is our conception of the uniformity or continuity of nature, so near akin to that of St. Augustine, which makes of the miraculous a fretting problem for us. What problem was there for Augustine? None whatever. He discussed many questions about miracles, but he does not seem to have been aware of any question about miracle in general. He takes the occurrence of miracles as a matter of course, of common notoriety. Particular miracles, or particular groups of miracles, might be challenged, but it does not seem to have occurred to him that any wider question could be raised. There is consequently in his writings no

broad treatment of the subject; if we would frame one according to his mind, it has to be pieced together from scattered indications. Moreover, his attitude is such that to get from him what we need we sometimes have to invert his arguments. A modern reader discovers with something of a shock that a sentence often quoted by apologetic writers was framed by St. Augustine, not for the defence of the credibility of miracles, but for the assertion of the continuity of nature. 'Portentum fit,' he says, 'non contra naturam, sed contra quam est nota natura.'[1] Observe where that sentence occurs. He is discussing the doctrine of hell-fire, to which some objected that it was contrary to the nature of a human body to be burnt without being consumed. In reply he refers to a portent reported by Varro. Why did Varro call it a portent? Because it seemed to be contrary to nature. But that was a mistake. Nothing occurs in nature which is contrary to nature; it seems so to us only because it is the effect of some natural causes which are unknown to us. The fact, you see, is taken for granted; the authority of Varro is incontestable; what Augustine labours to show is that the fact is no violation, no disturbance of the course of nature. Miracles are visible; this interpretation of miracle requires an act of faith.

But what did Augustine mean by a miracle? Much may turn upon a definition. There are disputations on this subject which seem to have no other turning-point. How did he understand *miraculum*? It was a wonder. I think that to some extent he was at the mercy of the word. He may have used

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 8. *Supra*, p. 28.

his little Greek to the extent of observing that in the canonical books of the New Testament the works of power which accompanied the preaching of the gospel are rarely described by a corresponding word of that idiom. I believe there is only one instance.[1] Thaumaturges belonged to other religions; Christianity seemed to avoid the name. But he might reflect further that wonder was at all events the first and most general effect of such works; to call them *miracula* was not to fall out with the facts. And if Augustine sometimes laid undue stress on the merely marvellous, he kept well in view the causes of amazement. In one of his earlier books there is a definition which will serve equally well for the study of his latest: 'Miraculum uoco quidquid arduum aut insolitum supra spem uel facultatem mirantis apparet.'[2] Here are two factors making an event miraculous. First, there is a percipient mind, which is moved to wonder. Secondly, the thing done is alternatively either unexpected because unusual, or difficult beyond the measure of the beholder's power. We may work from this definition.

The phrasing is less happy than might be expected, for Augustine's neatness in this kind of sentence stands out as a rule in striking contrast with his diffuse and clumsy periods. The definition needs explication. Two kinds of miracle are maladroitly conjoined; the kind which a beholder instinctively compares with his own actions, telling himself that it is beyond his power to do the like, and another kind which

[1] *Matt.* xxi. 15. *τὰ θαυμάσια ἃ ἐποίησε.* And this may perhaps refer only to the moral miracle of the cleansing of the Temple.

[2] *De Util. Cred.*, p. 16.

provokes no such comparison. It is evident that the former kind must be regarded as the act of a voluntary agent; the latter need not be so regarded. At the present day, if I am not mistaken, the former kind alone would be reckoned properly miraculous, the most amazing and inexplicable recovery from sickness would be excluded from that category unless there were supposed to be some definite relation of the event to a personal influence. St. Augustine did not so limit the category. He would make it include every unusual and inexplicable event, without reference to any voluntary action, other than the ultimate ordering of the will of God.

This I would press, for there is an important consequence. I cannot find any hard and fast line drawn by St. Augustine between one kind of wonder-working and another. He passes without any feeling of incongruity from freaks of nature, or conjuring tricks displayed in popular shows, to the veiled working of natural causes, thence to magic arts, and finally to the signs and wonders which tempters of God may demand under colour of religion.[1] He contem-

[1] *Confess.* x. 35. 'Ex hoc morbo cupiditatis in spectaculis exhibentur quaeque miracula. Hinc ad perscrutanda naturae, quae praeter nos non est, operta proceditur, quae scire nihil prodest et nihil aliud quam scire homines cupiunt. Hinc etiam, si quid eodem peruersae scientiae fine per artes magicas quaeritur. Hinc etiam in ipsa religione Deus temptatur, cum signa et prodigia flagitantur non ad aliquam salutem, sed ad solam experientiam desiderata.' All previous editors had read with codd. 'quae praeter nos est,' but Knöll seems to have been clearly right in restoring the negative, which Cod. Sessorianus retains. The ordinary reading gives the facile but pointless sense of 'external nature;' the more difficult reading with the negative points to a distinction between those secrets of nature which are entirely *praeter nos*, beyond our ken, and others which are not so inaccessible. Cf. *De Trinitate*, iv. 11. 'Facile est

plates the removal of certain things from the category of miracle by means of progressive science. There is an 'ordo naturalis,' he says in the third book *De Trinitate*, which custom has robbed of its wonder; but some things belonging to that order occur so rarely as to inspire amazement, until investigation brings them within the compass of the human understanding, and many recorded repetitions abate surprise.[1] Recall the definition of Miracle, and you will see that in this case what was *insolitum* is no longer *supra spem*. The thing which was miraculous is miraculous no longer. This relativeness of miracle appears even in Augustine's most popular teaching. Does the Psalmist talk of God's wondrous works? Augustine takes occasion to explain that a thing is wonderful in proportion to the abstruseness of its cause.[2]

Portents, prodigies, tricks of magic, miracles of

enim spiritibus nequissimis per aerea corpora facere multa quae mirentur animae terrenis corporibus aggrauatae etiam melioris affectus. Si enim corpora ipsa terrena nonnullis artibus et exercitationibus modificata in spectaculis theatricis tanta miracula hominibus exhibent ut ei qui nunquam uiderunt talia narrata uix credant, quid magnum est diabolo et angelis eius de corporeis elementis per aerea corpora facere quae caro miretur.' These two passages conclusively indicate the extension of the term *miraculum* for St. Augustine's mind.

[1] *Ibid.* iii. 2. 'Alius est ordo naturalis in conuersione et mutabilitate corporum qui, quamuis etiam ipse ad nutum Dei seruiat, perseuerantia tamen consuetudinis amisit admirationem, sicuti sunt quae uel breuissimis uel certe non longis interuallis temporum caelo terra marique mutantur, siue nascentibus siue occidentibus rebus, siue alias aliter atque aliter apparentibus; alia uero, quamuis ex ipso ordine uenientia, tamen propter longiora interualla temporum minus usitata; quae licet multi stupeant, ab inquisitoribus huius saeculi comprehensa sunt, et progressu generationum, quo saepius repetita et a pluribus cognita, eo minus mira sunt.'

[2] *In Ps.* cxviii. 27. 'Quanto enim quaeque res abstrusiores habet causas tanto est mirabilior.'

the gospel, miracles of the saints—all are brought under one general rubric, as things startling and inexplicable. They differ among themselves; they can be classified, but by qualities only. For example, after propounding the definition of miracle which I have quoted, Augustine proceeds to distinguish two kinds: those which induce wonder alone, and those which also promote sentiments of gratitude and goodwill.[1] All alike are miracles. But further, these various events, broadly described as miraculous, must not be too sharply distinguished from others which are not miraculous. What is there among all the works of God, he asks, which would not be marvellous, were it not cheapened by daily use?[2] The most ordinary operations of nature, he says elsewhere, would be miracles to one seeing them for the first time; we pass them by unnoticed, not because we have mastered their secrets—for nothing is more obscure than the causes of growth, of the opening or falling leaf, of the moving stars, of colour and sound, of taste and scent—but merely because of constant familiarity.[3] Indeed, the common things of the world, when justly

[1] *De Util. Cred.* 16. 'In duo diuiduntur: quaedam enim sunt quae solam faciunt admirationem, quaedam uero magnam etiam gratiam beneuolentiamque conciliant.'

[2] *Epist.* cxxxvii. 3. 'Quid autem non mirum facit Deus in omnibus creaturae motibus, nisi consuetudine quotidiana uiluissent?'

[3] *De Util. Cred.* 16. 'Nam diei et noctis uices et constantissimum ordinem rerum caelestium, annorum quadrifariam conuersionem, decidentes redeuntesque frondes arboribus, infinitam uim seminum, pulcritudinem lucis, colorum sonorum odorum saporumque uarietates, da qui primum uideat atque sentiat, cum quo tamen loqui possimus, hebescit obruiturque miraculis; nos uero haec omnia non cognoscendi facilitate—quid enim causis horum obscurius?—sed certe sentiendi assiduitate contemnimus."

estimated, are seen to be greater than those of rare and exceptional occurrence which move us to wonder.[1] And so he passes on to some reflexions which have become commonplaces. Any marvellous thing which happens in the world is less marvellous than the world taken as a whole.[2] The government of the whole world is a greater miracle than the feeding of five thousand men from five loaves.[3] More marvellous than any miracle wrought by man is man himself.[4]

It may be necessary to observe that these remarks are not evasions of a distressed apologetic. Augustine was anxious to fit miracles into the general scheme of things, not for the purpose of countering objections to miracle, but rather with the intention of showing that such abnormal events did not break up the continuity of nature. He was defending the universality of providence, the doctrine of the unity and omnipotence of God, against theories of chance, of pluralism, of intrusive agencies. It is true that he had sometimes to contend with doubters or deniers, but he seems to have regarded them as either cranks or partisans. It was only particular miracles that were called in question. He shrewdly remarks that impugners of the miracles recorded in Holy Scripture

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, x. 12. 'Cum ea sapienter intuemur, inusitatissimis rarissimisque maiora sunt.'

[2] *Ibid.* 'Quicquid igitur mirabile sit in hoc mundo, profecto minus est quam totus hic mundus.'

[3] *In Ioan.* 24. 'Maius enim miraculum est gubernatio totius mundi quam saturatio quinque milium hominum de quinque panibus, et tamen hoc nemo miratur. Illud mirantur homines, non quia maius est, sed quia rarum est.'

[4] *De Ciuit. Dei*, x. 12. 'Omni miraculo quod fit per hominem maius miraculum est homo.'

would eagerly take credit for similar incidents reported of Appuleius or Apollonius of Tyana.[1] There can be little doubt that he is here speaking from real experience. The field of miracle was a field of competition. There was less of this, perhaps, in Augustine's day than at some earlier periods, but it continued. He felt the pressure of signs and wonders which might deceive even the elect, and argued that the quality as well as the quantity of miracles should be tested. A visible marvel, he says, does not always indicate the presence of invisible wisdom.[2] The miracles of Christian saints, he urges, can be distinguished from similar wonders recorded of pagan gods, for these are demons labouring to pass themselves off as divine, while the saints claim no such honour, but bear witness to the one true God, theirs and ours.[3] The argument is forced, but it shows two things : first, that miracles were taken generally as indisputable facts, and secondly, that Augustine would measure them by a moral standard. Test a miracle, he says elsewhere, by its purpose : is it done for the glory of God or for the glorification of the doer ?[4]

A question is here inevitable. Augustine reckoned credulity a vice : did he himself escape that vice in regard to miracles ? He had an insatiable curiosity, which also he was inclined to blame, and a readiness to accept marvels on the slenderest evidence. The authority of the written page weighed much with him, he exaggerated the value of common report, and he seems to have had a childlike confidence in travellers' tales. But remember what he himself had seen.

[1] *Epist.* cii. 6. [2] *De Sermone Domini in Monte,* ii. 25.
[3] *De Ciuit. Dei,* xxiii. 10. [4] *LXXXIII. Quaest.* 79.

He had seen a magnet with a pendent chain of iron rings, and shuddered at the sight. The world before his eyes was full of inexplicable things, 'plenus innumerabilibus miraculis.'[1] Why boggle at one or two more? He was credulous, not because he was greedy of miracle, or anxious to sustain a wavering faith, but for sheer excess of evidence. He was not greedy of miracle. His warnings against the temptation of God implied in seeking after a sign are pretty constant. He comments on the comparative rarity of evangelic miracles in his own day, remarking with content that if they were common they would lose all moving power.[2] That was in the early days of his conversion. Much later he encountered the objection that such miracles do not happen. He replied with the story of the relics of Protasius and Gervasius, but referred with greater fervour to the standing miracle of the conversion of the world, which would be all the greater if the preaching of the gospel had not been supported by stupendous marvels.[3] Here is a very modern touch. It must be admitted, I think, that he acted with some inconsistency when he sent a priest and a clerk of his own monastery, who accused each other of grave disorders, to be tested by a miracle at the shrine of St. Felix of Nola, as he had heard of a thief being detected at Milan; but the open letter in which he tells the story shows how deeply he was moved and agitated by the scandal, and his pastoral earnestness redeems what he himself, at another time, might have condemned as presumption. It is significant that he sent the accused

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 7.
[2] *De Util. Cred.* 16.
[3] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxii. 8.

so far because he had heard of no such miracle being done at the numerous shrines of saints in Africa.[1]

Looking at miracles, then, through the eyes of St. Augustine, you must regard them as events occurring in the course of nature, but out of the ordinary course. The explanation is sometimes forced. The portent of a speaking ass must be taken as natural, in the sense, not that speech is natural to the dumb beast, but that the beast is naturally subject to a potent will.[2] Taken by itself, that would seem to imply an arbitrary intervention, or the physics of fairyland. But you must correlate it with a conception more general. The will of the Creator is the nature of each created thing.[3] There are monstrous births as well as normal births, exceptional events as well as ordinary events, all with their several places in the economy of nature. The ordinary is more familiar to us, but not more natural. There are sequences of cause and effect so customary that we cease to wonder at them; others more abstruse are equally consequential. Moses' rod takes the form of a serpent unnaturally, as it seems to us who know nature only in part; but this wonder happens in the course of nature as known to God.[4] God works alike in the ordinary way of nature and in extraordinary ways; it is by the will of God that water is drawn through root and branches to the grape, and distills in wine; it was by the will of God that water became wine at Cana with unwonted

[1] *Epist.* lxxviii. [2] *De Genes. ad Lit.* ix. 17.

[3] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 8. 'Uoluntas tanti utique conditoris conditae rei cuiusque natura est.'

[4] *De Genes. ad Lit.* vi. 13. 'Nec ista cum fiunt contra naturam fiunt, nisi nobis, quibus aliter naturae cursus innotuit, non autem Deo cui hoc est natura quod fecerit.'

swiftness.[1] Everything that happens has a natural cause, and stands in the order of nature. But of that order we know little. And so you come to St. Augustine's culminating conclusion; a miracle is done, 'non contra naturam, sed contra quam est nota natura.'

Within the last few days Dr. Sanday has been asking us to distinguish. He accepts the contention of St. Augustine that a miracle is not *contra naturam*; but he takes this in a negative sense, and not, like the African Father, in a positive sense. It means for him, not so much that all marvels actually occurring must have a place in the natural order, but rather that some asserted miracles must be ruled out because they are inconsistent with what is known in that order. He then makes, or finds, a distinction. Some recorded miracles he would place, not *contra naturam*, but *supra naturam*.[2] He limits nature, but allows a transcendence of the limits; there is something beyond, a region of 'higher spiritual forces;' these produce effects which are apparently within the natural order though not of it, and are to be considered possible because not inconsistent with its normal constituents. These forces are *supra naturam*, and to the events resulting from their action is attributed the quality of a like elevation. The events themselves are *supra naturam*, and it is on this account that they are properly miraculous. I might step aside to criticise this conception of miracle, interesting as coming so freshly from such a source, but my present concern is only to ask how it may illustrate, by agreement or contrariety, the conception of St.

[1] *De Genes. ad Lit.* vi. 13. Cf. *De Trinitate*, iii. 5.

[2] *Bishop Gore's Challenge to Criticism*, p. 23. *Infra*, pp. 154–160.

Augustine. I shall then observe that the limitation implied in Dr. Sanday's distinction would be impossible for Augustine; there is for him nothing above and beyond that nature which is continuous 'ab eo qui summe est' to the last effect of the last subordinate cause; there are higher and lower forces, but the highest are within the course of nature. The conclusion is imperative. According to the mind of St. Augustine, a miracle can no more be *supra naturam* than *contra naturam*. All things that happen are within the natural order.

If you would compare this conception of nature and miracle with that which has now been current for some centuries, I think you will find the difference coming in when the course of nature is taken to be a sort of closed order. The theologians of the school took over from the peripatetic philosophy the notion of a system, complete, compact, entirely knowable, cohering in a causal nexus. They hung this upon the idea of creation out of nothing by the Word of God, so that the whole system sprang into existence with all its potentialities at the fiat of the Creator. There was thus set up an approximate dualism of God and the world; not a true dualism, for that would involve the eternity of the world, but a dualism in working; God will have imparted to the world certain causal powers, which then work in a measure independently. He is a kind of emperor, reigning apart, while the affairs of the empire are managed by local authorities deriving their functions from the throne. A miracle will then be an act of God intervening directly, and to that extent disturbing the natural order. It is not merely unusual, unexpected,

transcending the narrow field of causality that is known to us; it is altogether apart from nature; it is, in the style of St. Thomas, 'praeter ordinem totius naturae creatae.'[1] In a word, it is a supernatural event.

The juristic temper of the Middle Ages found an opportunity here. Augustine spoke of *leges naturales* as expressions of the controlling will of God.[2] These *leges* became *iura*, with an implication of self-subsistence. What the legislator commanded was *lex*; what became stable in the social order was *ius*, and even the Prince could not without grave reason depart from this or modify it at his will. The natural order was likened to the social order. God became in some sort a constitutional monarch. He had prerogatives: among them the prerogative of dispensation. Bartolus of Sassoferrato, the great jurist of the fourteenth century, expressly brought miracles under this head of government: *iura naturalia*, he says, are mutable by divine empiry, or at the bidding of one to whom God has granted that power, as we see in the case of miracles.[3] But dispensation is

[1] *S.T.* i. 110, 4. See, however, in *S. contra Gent.* iii. 100, the proof that miracles, regarded from this point of view, are *non contra naturam.*

[2] *Supra*, p. 73.

[3] Woolf, *Bartolus of Sassoferrato*, p. 13, quotes as follows: 'Iura enim non ad singulares personas, sed generaliter constituuntur et etiam de necessario se habentibus. Leges enim constringunt hominum uitas, et eis omnes oboedire oportet, maxime quia est inuentio et donum Dei, ut ait Demosthenes et retulit Martianus. Nec praedictis obuiat quia mutabilia sunt per Principis imperium, uel alterius cui attinet, quia etiam quae iura naturalia sunt mutabilia sunt diuino imperio uel alterius cui Deus concesserit, ut in miraculis declaratum est: nec tamen per hoc minus dicuntur necessario se habere.' Mr. Woolf has been good enough to correct an error of transcription for my benefit.

confessedly an undesirable exercise of power, *uulnus in legem*, to be tolerated only when there is a just and necessary cause. Hence the maxim, 'miracula non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem.' It seems to have been felt that there was a touch of impropriety in such interferences with the course of nature. The feeling grew stronger as the domain of natural law was more accurately mapped. The great paradox of the nineteenth century, insistence on law coupled with doubt or denial of the existence of a law-giver, left no room for a dispensing power. The other paradox of the time, the tacit assumption that the part of nature more or less accurately mapped is a faithful representation of the whole, and the supposed discovery that within this range miracles do not happen, completed the doctrine of the closed order.[1] There seems to be a genuine feeling that miracle is indecent. If we used the language of the school we should call it *inconveniens*. Even a convinced theist may be disposed—forgive the irreverence —to warn off the Creator from this ground. The profane witticism of the Jansenist pasquinade finds a new meaning :

> De par le Roi, défense à Dieu
> De faire miracle en ce lieu.

'Ce lieu' is the world as we know it.

It is not to be denied that support for this development can be extracted from the writings of St. Augustine. Passages isolated from their context can

[1] Sir Oliver Lodge wrote in the *Times* of November 28, 1914 : 'The average scientific man has made up his mind that things out of the common are impossible, and he will not listen with any seriousness to evidence for them.'

be cited, and have been cited, in defence of almost every new position taken up. We have seen with what strictness he would sometimes define the sequence of cause and effect. On the other hand, his doctrine of reserved causes, those which are not implanted in the creature but retained in the custody of the divine will, lends itself to a theory of interference.[1] I will direct your attention to one passage which has never been used, so far as I know, in this fashion, but which may lend some colour even to the fantastic notion of dispensation. He has been speaking of the *leges naturales* by virtue of which living beings generate only their own kind. They have this inherent power by the will of God, not apart from God, and the Creator has in himself a further power to produce from them something other than their own *seminales rationes* allow.[2] That looks very much like an exaggerated anticipation of the greater variations in which biologists have recently been

[1] *De Genes. ad Lit.* vi. 18. 'Si autem non omnes causas creatura primitus condita praefixit, sed aliquas in sua uoluntate seruauit, non sunt quidem illae quas in sua uoluntate seruauit ex istarum quas creauit necessitate pendentes.'

[2] *Ibid.* ix. 17. 'Omnis iste naturae usitatissimus cursus habet quasdam naturales leges suas, secundum quas et spiritus uitae, qui creatura est, habet quosdam appetitus suos determinatos quodam modo, quos etiam mala uoluntas non possit excedere, et elementa mundi huius corporei habent definitam vim qualitatemque suam, quid unumquodque ualeat uel non ualeat, quid de quo fieri possit uel non possit. Ex his uelut primordiis rerum omnia quae gignuntur suo quaeque tempore exortus processusque sumunt, finesque et decessiones sui cuiusque generis. Unde fit ut de grano tritici non nascatur faba, uel de faba triticum, uel de pecore homo, uel de homine pecus. Super hunc autem motum cursumque rerum naturalem potestas creatoris habet apud se posse de his omnibus facere aliud quam eorum quasi seminales rationes habent; non tamen id quod non in eis posuit ut de his fieri uel ab ipso possit. *Supra*, p. 37.

seeking the origin of species; but before the appearance of this hypothesis it would have looked still more like a suspension of natural law. The passage might be quoted in support of a theory of miraculous intervention, whether reduced to the category of dispensation or otherwise conceived.

This use of isolated texts, however, becomes impossible when you take St. Augustine's conception of nature and miracle as a whole. He is not invariably consistent. That is not to be expected. He was feeling his way through a maze of natural causes, a very small part of which was explored, with no clue but a conviction that all was rationally ordered, and that what seemed intrusive was part of a connected plan. It was not a labyrinth of stone, built and left by a master mind, but was in part a complicated dance of living powers, threading the pillars and gateways of the world. The designer himself was present, taking part in the action, controlling every movement. The traveller's comfort was an assurance that these evolutions were not laid out for his bewilderment, but that by observing them closely he might find his way. 'The miracles of Jesus Christ,' says Augustine in one of his profoundest moods, 'were wrought for the purpose of drawing the human mind from visible things to the task of understanding God. For inasmuch as he is not of a substance to be seen by our eyes, and his miracles whereby he rules and administers the whole created world are cheapened by constant use, so that few or none will note his wonderful works in each grain of seed, he has of his mercy reserved to himself some works to be done at befitting

times apart from the customary course of nature, in order that, beholding things not greater but unwonted, they for whom the daily round is naught may stand amazed.' [1]

It is possible that before long we may find ourselves in thought nearer to St. Augustine than to St. Thomas Aquinas or Herbert Spencer.

[1] *In Ioan.* 24.

LECTURE V

GOOD AND EVIL

'Omnis natura, in quantum natura est, bonum est.'[1] That sentence became, as I have said, a catchword in the mouth of St. Augustine. It summed up his contention against Manichæism, and in his later years he was maintaining against the followers of Pelagius the limitation which it implied. 'Bonum est.' Subject to the limitation implied in the words 'in quantum natura est,' he might have gone further and said 'bona est;' for evil things, he maintained, are not evil by nature. He did, in fact, say as much, and that in the latest stage of his thought, when the saying could be sufficiently guarded: 'Omnis natura, etiam si uitiosa est, in quantum natura est, bona est; in quantum uitiosa est, mala est.'[2] An earlier assertion, more rashly made, he corrected in his Retractations; it should be applied only to that 'quae proprie natura dicitur,' to nature as originally called into being by God.[3] Things as they are may have become evil; it is risky to call them good because of some remnant of good that is still in them;

[1] *De Natura Boni*, 1; *et alibi*.

[2] *Enchiridion*, p. 4. Cf. *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 3; *supra*, p. 46.

[3] *De Duabus Animabus*, 12. 'Natura esse malae animae nullo modo queunt.' *Retract.* i. 15.

but neither, on the other hand, are they entirely evil; no work of God, however spoilt, ceases to be God's creature, and as such it is still *bonum aliquid*, a good thing.

What did Augustine mean when he called a thing good? In the first place, he meant that it exists. To be is good. Obviously. And yet there is much circular argument about the point, which seems to indicate dissatisfaction or restlessness. The goodness of abstract being is, indeed, a thin conception. St. Augustine did not feed freely on abstractions. His Platonic studies had not destroyed in him the Roman or African inclination to the concrete. He faced the conception rather as involving the proposition that the thing which exists is good. *Est* was more for him than *esse*. But then he was confronted with the fact of experience, not to be gainsaid, that some things which exist are bad. He could, however, enjoy abstraction to the point of abstracting the category of being from that which is, so as to arrive at something indisputable: 'Quicquid est, in quantum est, bonum est.'[1] This abstract being may then be treated quantitatively; a thing may have more or less of it; a diminution of it is a diminution of goodness, and so evil comes in. 'Quicquid minus est quam erat, non in quantum est sed in quantum minus est, malum est.'[2]

You might suppose, then, that evil stands to good as non-existence to existence. But no: the philosophy of the abstract may draw that conclusion, but Augustine still holds by the concrete. Evil things do in fact exist, but you cannot abstract

[1] *De Uera Rel.* 11. [2] *Ibid.* 12.

their evil from them as a positive quality. It is negative; a mere diminution. It is only a tendency to non-existence. Therefore it co-exists with good, but has no other mode of existence. It is only a good thing that can suffer diminution of goodness, only an existing thing that can be moving towards non-existence. In other words, only a good thing can be evil.[1] It is Augustine's favourite paradox. Evil is the diminution of good, to the point of extinction;[2] but when that point is reached where a thing has lost all its goodness, it has lost its being; there is nothing. And since there can be no further diminution of good, this particular evil ceases; it cannot continue in any way of itself. 'Ergo quaecumque sunt, bona sunt.'[3]

Goodness, then, is a positive quality inherent in that which is. Evil is merely negative. We must not only deny it the substantiality which the Manichæans attributed to it; even as a quality we must refuse to allow it any positive existence. Good and evil are not properly in opposition, for they

[1] *Enchir.* 4; to the conclusion, 'Non igitur potest esse malum, nisi aliquod bonum. Quod cum dici uideatur absurde, connexio tamen ratiocinationis huius uelut ineuitabiliter nos compellit hoc dicere.' *Infra*, p. 107.

[2] *Confess.* iii. 7. 'Priuationem boni usque ad quod omnino non est.'

[3] *Ibid.* vii. 12. 'Aut igitur nihil nocet corruptio, quod fieri non potest, aut, quod certissimum est, omnia quae corrumpuntur priuantur bono. Si autem omni bono priuabuntur, omnino non erunt. Si enim erunt et corrumpi iam non poterunt, meliora erunt, quia incorruptibiliter permanebunt. Et quid monstrosius quam ea dicere omni bono amisso facta meliora? Ergo si omni bono priuabuntur, omnino nulla erunt: ergo quamdiu sunt, bona sunt. Ergo quaecumque sunt, bona sunt, malumque illud, quod quaerebam unde esset, non est substantia, quia si substantia esset bonum esset.'

are not on the same plane of reality. You may illustrate this from Augustine's treatment of two physical phenomena, one of which he understood much better than the other. To compare evil with darkness was common form, and the comparison served him well, for he was aware that darkness was nothing else but defect of light. We need not trouble ourselves about his particular conception of the nature of light, which he took to be corporeal; the point is that he assigned to it a real existence, which darkness had not.[1] But he was not so well informed about the physics of heat. He took heat and cold to be positive qualities counteracting each other. He could speak of them almost as if they were substances—a heat that makes things hot and a coldness that makes things cold. 'What is hotter than heat itself?' he asks.[2] But in the same breath he speaks of the swiftness that makes things swift. There follows a not very profound examination of the phenomena of motion, and I think you will conclude that on this occasion he was speaking mere commonplaces. You may sometimes be told that an express train was 'velocity itself,' but you will not credit your informant with belief in a substance so named. So in this passage we need not

[1] *De Gen. contra Manich.* i. 4. 'Ubi lux non est, tenebrae sunt; non quia aliquid sunt tenebrae, sed ipsa lucis absentia tenebrae dicuntur.' Cf. *Confess.* xii. 3. *In Psalm* vii. 'Non quod aliqua sit natura tenebrarum. Omnis enim natura, in quantum natura est, esse cogitur. Esse autem ad lucem pertinet: non esse ad tenebras. Qui ergo deserit eum a quo factus est et inclinat in id unde factus est, id est in nihilum, in hoc peccato tenebratur.'

[2] *In Psalm.* cxlvii. 'Quid calidius ipso calore quo calet quicquid fit calidum?'

see anything but the meaningless convention of certain philosophies which would say that velocity makes things swift, and heat makes things hot. But even so, Augustine could not compare good and evil with heat and cold, as he compared them with light and darkness. I am tempted to observe that we could do so in his name, since we understand coldness to be nothing but loss of heat, and the catastrophe that awaits us at the absolute zero of temperature, if I am rightly informed about that mystery, is not unlike the result of the absolute zero of good as conceived by him.

But can we imagine St. Augustine playing with these arid speculations about the good of abstract being? Well, he did more than play with them. They came to him with his Platonizing, and he took them very seriously. They were never far from the forefront of his mind. But they could not satisfy him. He improved on his Platonics. The *summum bonum* was for him far more than supreme being. He read Plato himself with a difference. What Plato said in myth he read as reality. He was more daringly and more consistently anthropomorphic. He pictured the Eternal as good in the ethical, human sense, and so he interpreted Plato's doctrine that the motive of creation was the unselfish desire of God to make creatures like himself. He was helped by Cicero's translation, in which the *ἀρχὴ κυριωτάτη* of the *Timaeus* became 'causa iustissima.' For Augustine, goodness is never without ethical content.[1]

[1] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29. *Λέγωμεν δὴ δι' ἥντινα αἰτίαν γένεσιν καὶ τὸ πᾶν τόδε ὁ ξυνιστὰς ξυνέστησεν. Ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος. τούτου δ' ἐκτὸς ὢν πάντα ὅτι μάλιστα γενέσθαι ἐβουλήθη παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ. Ταύτην δὴ*

I speak, as before, of his bold anthropomorphism. But it was limited. Push it far enough, and you come up against the protest of John Stuart Mill, who refused to call good a being conceived as doing things that would be condemned in a man. I do not think that Augustine would have had much patience with that refusal. He would probably have called it petulance. He would not make man the measure of God. He was fully satisfied with St. Paul's grim rejoinder : 'Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God ?' He would not set up two moral standards, one for the sovran will of God and one for the subject will of man ; but he would brush aside as absurd the contention that the imperfect apprehension of the single standard by means of which men judge one another is the true measure of absolute goodness. He was seldom happy, as it seems to me, in his attempts to justify the obscure working of providence in nature, or the scriptural records which he took to be indisputable revelations of the divine will ; but that is partly because he was less sensitive than we are to some moral perplexities ; he touches us more nearly when he leaves questions frankly unsolved, declaring his conviction that God's judgment is certainly righteous, but inscrutable.

Then why justify God ? Can that be attempted without the assumption of a standard of goodness or

γενέσεως καὶ κόσμου μάλιστ' ἄν τις ἀρχὴν κυριωτάτην παρ' ἀνδρῶν φρονίμων ἀποδεχόμενος ὀρθότατα ἀποδέχοιτ' ἄν. There is a characteristically Roman touch in Cicero's rendering of *ἀγαθὸς* by *probus*, of *κυριωτάτη* by *iustissima*, and the tendency to identify goodness with justice was always dogging the footsteps of Augustine himself.

rectitude external to God? In view of Augustine's ordinary postulates, no such standard can be sought; there can be no moral arraignment, no moral defence, of what God does. Whatever ethical content you may read into the idea of goodness will be consequent, not antecedent; you are forced back to find your only standard in bare existence; whatever is, is right. Yet Augustine laboured this way and that, sometimes in face of insuperable difficulties, to justify God. Why?

The only answer, I think, is to be found in a certain moral necessity of our nature. As we are restless until we rest in God, so are we driven to seek a harmony in the whole of nature, and especially a correspondence of our nature with its Author.[1] But we have a natural *habitus animi*, which we call justice; and there is a natural law of right: 'natura ius est quod non opinio genuit sed quaedam innata uis inseruit.'[2] Knowing this, we are impelled to correlate our own sense of right and the known operations of God. So far as we fail to do this, our thought is incoherent. When Augustine labours to justify the ways of God, he is not attempting the impossibility of judging them by some external standard; he is comparing one work of God with another, for the purpose of reducing his own knowledge of both to coherence.

[1] *Confess.* i. 1. 'Tu excitas ut laudare te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.' This seems to be the sense of the baffling words *ad te*.

[2] *Qu. lxxxiii.* 31. Cf. *De Util. Cred.* 12; 'Sapientes uoco, non cordatos et ingeniosos homines, sed eos quibus inest, quanta inesse homini potest, ipsius hominis Deique firmissime percepta cognitio, atque huic cognitioni uita moresque congruentes.' Both Socrates and the Stoics are here at bare arm's length.

The coherence of nature implies an ethical purpose in the Creator of which the ethical purpose of man is an imperfect image. We can therefore more or less accurately trace that purpose. I am here speaking of ethical purpose in the broadest possible sense. In everything there is an intention, a προαίρεσις. We shall find a thing good in proportion as it fulfils the purpose of its maker: goodness is suitability. That is covered by two words out of three in a passage of the book *De Natura Boni*: 'Omnia enim, quanto magis moderata speciosa ordinata sunt, tanto magis utique bona sunt.'[1] *Moderatum* and *ordinatum* stand for adaptation to purpose, and I think you will not find it difficult to bring *speciosum* under the same rubric. There is a 'lex aeterna,' identified as 'ratio diuina uel uoluntas Dei,' which requires the conservation of natural order; that which obeys this law is good.[2] I shall cite once more the saying, 'Quod equo natura est homini crimen est.'[3] The irrationality of horse and mule, requiring bit and bridle, befits them as much as it would disgrace a man. The beasts of the field are blessed because they fulfil the purpose of their being: 'in sua natura quam acceperunt peragunt uitam.'[4]

You might expect Augustine to adopt the Stoic standard of human goodness: ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν. He comes near it in the Dialogue *contra Academicos*, where he reckons it beatitude to live 'secundum id quod in homine optimum est.' This that is best in man is then defined as 'mens et ratio,'

[1] *De Nat. Boni*, 3.
[2] *Contra Faustum*, xxii. 27.
[3] *Supra*, p. 35.
[4] *De Gen. contra Manich.* ii. 17.

and the good of life is thus to be in all things rational.[1] That, however, savours rather of Plato than of the Porch. Compare the passage in the book *De Utilitate Credendi*, where he says bluntly 'recta ratio est ipsa uirtus,' and draws the conclusion, 'solus igitur sapiens non peccat.'[2] Wisdom is here 'ipsius hominis Deique cognitio.' In later years he shifted his ground. He saw that even what was best in man might become an unsafe standard. He found a fundamental absurdity in the Stoic ethics, which bade man seek beatitude by living in accordance with nature, and at the same time advised an escape from life by suicide, if natural troubles became more than one could bear with dignity.[3] He found similar flaws in all human standards. So the earlier definition was revised. In the Retractations, Augustine confessed that he should have made beatitude consist in living, not according to the best that is in man, but 'secundum Deum.'[4] But to live 'secundum Deum' is to live according to the will of the Creator, and the will of the Creator is, for Augustine, the order of nature. It may seem, therefore, that you are brought back to the Stoic maxim; and that would be true, were there not a serious difference between the Stoic conception of φύσις and St. Augustine's conception of nature.

Here we are at the critical point of our investigation. Augustine allowed no separation of physics and ethics; there was, at most, a topical distinction. Still less could he recognize any border line between physic and metaphysic. All was held in unity by

[1] *Contra Acad.* i. 2.
[2] *De Util. Cred.* 12.
[3] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xix. 4.
[4] *Retract.* i. 1.

his conception of Will, the creative and ordaining will of God. If I may venture to evoke him as disputant in the controversies of our day, he would certainly have rejected the dualism of Huxley's contrast between nature and civilization: a nature in which the relentless struggle for existence makes for continual progress through the survival of the fittest, and a civilization which cuts athwart that natural process to seek a wholly disparate method of advancement. If he adopted a theory of evolution —his own doctrine of *seminales rationes* would suit a more recent theory than Huxley's, but let that pass—I think he would ask how civilized man, regarded as the product of a causal order, could be anything else but what that order made him; he would bring to bear his conception of unity and continuity, would show that civilization itself is a product of cosmic evolution, would correlate the Law of the Jungle and the Law of the City upon the one sure base of the will of God. Just as we have seen that his system allows no absolute distinction of nature and supernature, so now we must observe that it affords no room for two separate planes of being, physical and ethical. It is therefore a mistake to say that he confused cosmic or metaphysical good with ethical good. He did not confuse them; he reduced them logically to a single category. Goodness is suitability. That is good which fills its proper place, fitting harmoniously into the whole system of nature, which is the working of the will of God.

But what then is evil? Unfitness. But how can this be? If all things issue from one creative

act,[1] or even if they come from the continuous working of one self-consistent will, how can there be any discrepancy, any lack of correspondence, any unfitness? Each thing will have its place in accordance with the general plan, and there is no alien or intrusive power that can force it elsewhere. If this be the standard of goodness, we seem to be heading straight for inviolable optimism. Assume the perfect goodness of the Creator, and the world that he has made will be the best of all possible worlds; assume his omnipotence, the absence of any independent power that might interfere,[2] and in this best of worlds all will be ordered for the best. If Augustine had not been a stern realist, he might have been carried far in this sense by his reaction from the Manichæan hypostatizing of evil. Being what he was, and having his experiences behind him, he could not reduce all even to gradations of goodness.[3] I shall try to show presently that the pressure of his argument forced him to eliminate much that is commonly reckoned evil, and to attribute the ordinary valuation of it to imperfect apprehension; but his consciousness of sin gave him certain facts which could not be explained away. They had to be accounted for. I have already, in my second lecture, glanced at his attitude in face of this difficulty; I must now bespeak your attention to it more in detail. Whence, then, is evil?

But, first, what is evil? It is needless to pile up

[1] *De Genes. ad Lit.* viii. 20. 'Creauit omnia simul.'

[2] *Confess.* vii. 13. 'Et tibi omnino non est malum, non solum tibi sed nec uniuersae creaturae tuae, quia extra non est aliquid, quod inrumpat et corrumpat ordinem quem imposuisti ei.'

[3] *Ibid.* vii. 7. 'Iam itaque me, adiutor meus, illis uinculis solueras; et quaerebam unde malum, et non erat exitus.'

citations. Augustine's most familiar doctrine is that which he himself says he learnt from the Platonics,[1] that evil is merely negative, a defect of good. He seems to have seized on this at once as solving the riddles which had formerly driven him to Manichæism.[2] From the doctrine thus received at the beginning of his conversion he never swerved. Even when his theology has taken its gloomiest colour, he still maintains that 'animorum quaecunque sunt uitia, naturalium sunt priuationes bonorum.'[3] He has various phrases of the same sense. Evil is nothing else but *corruptio*[4]; it is nothing if not *a bonitate defectus*.[5] These terms are borrowed from Plotinus, for whom evil is στέρησις or ἔλλειψις τοῦ ἀγάθου,[6] and there can be little doubt that Augustine took them ready-made from the translation of Victorinus. He begins to part company with his teachers when he insists on the essential goodness of that in which there is a falling away. Plotinus thought of all that is good in the world of human experience as being lodged in something 'other,' not good, which makes failure inevitable.[7] There is no such 'other' for Augustine, and no inevitable evil. All nature is good, and evils are *uitia naturarum*.[8] I have referred to the comparison of evil with darkness, which is merely absence

[1] *Confess.* vii. 12, 13.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 7. 'Quibus rerum ignarus perturbabar et recedens a ueritate ire in eam mihi uidebar, quia non noueram malum non esse nisi priuationem boni.'

[3] *Enchiridion*, 3.

[4] *Contra Ep. Fund.* 35.

[5] *Contra Iulianum*, i. 8.

[6] *Ennead.* i. 8, 1; iii. 2, 5.

[7] *Ibid.* ''Ανάγκη δὲ ἔλλειψιν εἶναι ἐνταῦθα ἀγαθοῦ, ὅτι ἐν ἄλλῳ. τὸ οὖν ἄλλο, ἐν ᾧ ἔστι τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἕτερον ἀγαθοῦ ὂν ποιεῖ τὴν ἔλλειψιν.'

[8] *Contra Iulianum*, i. 8.

of light.[1] The same conception of evil as negative is otherwise expressed in Augustine's continuous denial that it is in any way substantial or has any natural existence. Here too I will not accumulate examples, but will note only the emphatic teaching of the *Enchiridion*. An injury done to the body by disease or wound is nothing else but a loss of health, and healing is not the removal of an evil from the body to continue in existence elsewhere, as would be the case if it were a substance; the disorder is a mere accident of the body's existence, and merely ceases when health is restored.[2] That is Augustine's last word on the subject, as it was his first.

But to ascertain what evil is was not to account for it. Manichæism was so far countered; but can the human mind be satisfied with a simple refutation of error? Augustine's mind could not. There was an obvious difficulty. If nature is the work of God, entirely good, whence comes this tendency to failure? What is the cause of this loss, this corruption? How can nature be vitiated? How is evil possible? If you seek an efficient cause, Augustine rebukes you; it is a case of deficiency, not of efficiency.[3]

[1] *Supra*, p. 95.

[2] *Enchiridion*, 3. 'Nam sicut corporibus animalium nihil est aliud morbis et uulneribus adfici quam sanitate priuari—neque enim id agitur, cum adhibetur curatio, ut mala ista quae inerant, id est morbi ac uulnera, recedant hinc et alibi sint, sed utique ut non sint; non enim ulla substantia sed carnalis substantiae uitium est uulnus aut morbus, cum caro sit ipsa substantia, et profecto aliquid bonum, cui accidunt ista mala, id est priuationes eius boni quod dicitur sanitas—ita et animorum quaecunque sunt uitia naturalium sunt priuationes bonorum, quae, cum sanantur, non aliquo transferuntur, sed ea quae ibi erant nusquam erunt, quando in illa sanitate non erunt.'

[3] *Supra*, p. 56.

But that play of words leaves you where you were. If he will have it so, let us ask what is the deficient cause? Augustine thought that he had found it. I have already stated his conclusion; let us now examine it.

And first observe how he ruled out what he would learn from Plato. He could not trace evil to the resistance of an intractable material from which the world was formed. That was but one remove from Manichæism. He found mention, even in Scripture, of a *materia informis* from which the world was made, but this also was created by God, and created with a capacity for receiving form.[1] This also was good, and entirely subject to the will of God. That avenue was closed.

Equally intolerable was the Plotinian reduction of evil to metaphysical remoteness from the One; partly because Plotinus identified this remoteness with matter, and so would lead him back by another way to the practical consequences of Manichæism. It was always against those practical consequences that Augustine was in revolt, and any theory involving them stood condemned.

[1] *Wisdom*, xi. 18. Κτίσασα τὸν κόσμον ἐξ ἀμόρφου ὕλης. The Vulgate has 'quae creauit orbem terrarum ex materia inuisa.' Augustine was acquainted with the better rendering 'qui fecisti mundum ex materia informi,' and he comments: 'Nullo modo credendum est illam ipsam materiam de qua factus est mundus, quamuis informem, quamuis inuisam, quocunque modo esset, per se ipsam esse potuisse, tanquam coaeternam et coaeuam Deo; sed quemlibet modum suum, quem habebat ut quoquo modo esset et distinctarum rerum formas posset accipere, non habebat nisi ab omnipotente Deo, cuius beneficio est res non solum quaecunque formata sed etiam quaecunque formabilis.' *De Fide et Symbolo*, 2. Cf. *Confess.* xii. 3. *Supra*, p. 34.

What then ? We come to the solution which he persistently put forward, and which evidently satisfied him. He may have loved it the better because it was the child of his own wit. Starting from the metaphysical identification of good with being, he observed that all created things were called into being out of not-being : that is to say, out of nothingness, *e nihilo*. Lucretius, if none other, would give him the phrase, and insistence on it would be an apt rejoinder to Epicurean physics. This contingent being is therefore the root of goodness for created things ; it is their nature so to be, and by nature they are good. But, because they were called out of nothingness, they have a tendency to return thither : that is, to fall away from their proper goodness. Evil is such falling away.

St. Augustine's writings are full of this thought. Illustrations may be found everywhere. Take this from the passage about darkness in the exposition of the seventh Psalm, to which I have already referred :[1] 'Qui deserit eum a quo factus est et inclinat in id unde factus est, id est in nihilum, in hoc peccato tenebratur.' Take this, again, from the sixth book *de Ciuitate Dei*. It is asked how the will can go wrong, and the conclusion of an elaborate investigation is that a nature, originally good, is perverted to evil choice, 'quia ex nihilo facta est.'[2] In the treatise *Contra Epistulam Fundamenti* you read that natures are capable of corruption because they are not produced from God's substance but are made by him of nothing : 'non de Deo genitae, sed ab eo de nihilo factae.'[3] Long after he says the same in

[1] *Supra*, p. 95. [2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, vi. 6. [3] *Contra Ep. Fund.* 36.

the first book *Contra Iulianum.* Natures would not be mutable if they were *de Deo*; they can fall away from good because they are *de nihilo.*[1]

So far we are concerned with good only as it is identified with being. It is obvious that the tendency *in nihilum* can be found only in things that actually exist: when the bourne is reached, they will exist no longer. Hence the paradox that evil is found only in things that are good. We know it, not as total deprivation of good, but as a movement away from good. Things purely good can exist, says Augustine, things purely evil cannot; there can be no nature in which no element of good remains.[2] Even at the end, when the ethical interest has almost excluded all else, you find him arguing in the Enchiridion, as formerly in the Confessions: 'So long as nature is being corrupted there is in it some good of which it is being deprived. If it can lose no more good, it becomes incorruptible by process of corruption, which is absurd. If it be totally corrupted, then indeed no good will remain in it, for it will cease to exist. Corruption therefore can destroy good only by destroying nature.'[3] But he is not content with this dry metaphysic. Goodness belongs to the category of quality, as well as to that of existence. In all things that exist there are certain good qualities, and evil is recognized only in evil qualities which are a set-off to these. You ask of a man, *qualis sit?* and the answer is *malus.*[4] He argues curiously that corrupt gold is worth more than incorrupt silver,

[1] *Contra Iulian.* i. 18. [2] *De Ciuit. Dei,* xii. 3; xix. 13.
[3] *Enchir.* 4. Cf. *Confess.* viii. 12. *Supra,* p. 94.
[4] *Contra Iulianum,* i. 8. *Supra,* p. 57.

by virtue of its abiding qualities.[1] In this sense you should read the penetrating remark: 'Nullius uituperatur uitium nisi cuius natura laudatur.'[2] When he is at grips with Pelagianism, and is being driven to make the worst of fallen human nature, he still emphasizes the good things that man retains, 'in formatione, uita, sensibus, mente.'[3] Qualities are set against qualities, but the good qualities of any given thing are wrapped up with its existence, because they were impressed upon it by the will that called it into being; the loss of those qualities will be a relapse towards nothingness, *in nihilum*.

Here, then, Augustine places the origin of evil. Can we accept his account of it? There is an obvious question. Why should things created by God out of nothing have this tendency to return to nothing? If you watch his argument critically you will find that he often seems to be on the verge of treating this *nihil* as if it were a real state of existence. But that would be to fall back upon the very dualism that he is combating. His *nihil* would answer either to the Manichæan Kingdom of Darkness, as Julian of Eclanum roundly asserted that it did, or to the Platonic *materia informis*, into which things might relapse through loss of form. It is hard to say how far Augustine was unconsciously affected by this latter conception. The ὕλη of Plotinus, on which he must have expended much thought, was not the prejacent material of the world, imperfectly plastic and therefore resistant, which Plato imagined; the theory of emanation allowed no more independence

[1] *De Natura Boni*, 5.
[2] *De Libero Arbitrio*, iii. 13.
[3] *De Nat. et Gratia*, 3.

of the One than did his own doctrine of Creation; in the Plotinian system matter is an effect of extreme differentiation, and the idea has been boldly rendered in modern terminology as 'the limitation inseparable from finitude.'[1] Room might be found for that idea in St. Augustine's system also, but not for making this work of God the source of evil. Against the Plotinian doctrine of the necessity of evil he stood firm.

I think you will get hold of his fundamental thought in a passage that I have quoted, where he gives to the phrase *de nihilo fieri* a negative sense.[2] The point is that created things are not *de Deo*; and since there is nothing of independent existence over against God, there is no other alternative, but they are *de nihilo*. And since they are not *de Deo*, they do not share the immutability of God. They have a certain relation to the supreme and immutable good, and this relative existence is their own proper good; but, being mutable, they are necessarily capable of falling away from this good, and such falling away is their proper evil. The origin of evil lies, therefore, in the mutability of created things, and this mutability is due to their being *de nihilo*, and not *de Deo*. So far good. But it seems to me that Augustine was fascinated with this idea *de nihilo*, and played with it dangerously. It is obvious that a falling away from the good of being is a movement towards not-being, and so he made a graphic scheme of good and evil as a process *de nihilo in nihilum*.

[1] I have borrowed this from an unpublished essay by Mr. W. Montgomery, editor with Dr. Gibb of the *Confessions*.

[2] *Contra Ep. Fund.* 36. *Supra*, p. 106. The argument is further developed, *De Anima et eius Origine*, ii. 3.

What was originally a mere way of accounting for the mutability of things took on the appearance of a causal explanation, and he narrowly escaped the fantastic error of attributing to this *nihil* a real existence. It may serve to show how persistent is the peril of dualism.

But now there is another difficulty. If God has created things mutable, is not mutability their natural constitution, and therefore good? Unquestionably. I quoted in my second lecture Augustine's description of the process by which one thing perishing gives birth to another, and so maintains the course of nature.[1] He argues the case more elaborately in the third book *De Libero Arbitrio*. Fruits of the earth are consumed as such, and so are corrupted, when a man eats them. Is that evil? No, for they are finding their proper use in the order of nature. With characteristic insistence on etymology, he says that you vituperate only what is vicious. Natural mutations are not blameworthy; he is unwilling to call them corruptions; at all events they are not vicious: 'Aut nec corruptiones quidem dicendae sunt, aut certe, quia uitiosae non sunt, dignae uituperatione esse non possunt.'[2] He was not always so careful of his words; you will find him speaking of *uitia naturalia* for which no punishment is due.[3] But that is only a verbal discrepancy. He had and retained a firm grip on the principle that a vicious mutation, an evil, is one that disturbs the order of nature.

That is thoroughly sound. Things have not a

[1] *Supra*, p. 44.
[2] *De Libero Arbitrio*, iii. 14.
[3] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 3. *Supra*, p. 27.

merely individual existence in nature ; they are part of an order, and their proper good is to fill their proper place in that order whether by enduring or by changing. But as you pursue this thought evil seems to be a vanishing quantity. A diminishing measure of existence, *minus esse*, *defectus a bono corruptio*, *priuatio boni*—what is left of it all ? Are individual things so entirely wrapped up in the universe that their good is nothing else but what they contribute to the general good ? Is it enough that loss to one is gain to another ? That is Emersonian optimism. Is our human language at fault when we speak of things becoming worse ? Ought we to say merely that they are changing ? Is it a mistake to complain that our clothes are wearing out ? Is it wrong to say that wine goes bad ?

Augustine stood by common sense and common speech, but I think it must be allowed that in this particular he parted from it in search of more accurate thought. Doing so, he revealed the inadequacy of the notion that mutability means a tendency *in nihilum*. In point of fact, as he plainly saw, things do not tend by natural mutation to become *nothing* : they tend to become *something else* in nature. But do they always tend to become something equally good ? He cites an instance of a rise in the scale of being : the fruits of the earth are transmuted into human flesh.[1] But what of other cases ? If salt has lost its savour, it may still be fit for the dunghill, and fitness is goodness. What is corrupted wine good for ? Augustine was troubled about men with sore eyes : the splendour of the African sun was good,

[1] *De Lib. Arbitr.* iii. 14, *ut supra*.

but it caused them excruciating pain. At one time he was disposed to blame the owner of the eyes for opening them ;[1] at another time he seems by analogy to make the soreness a penalty for sin.[2] This latter notion belongs to another connexion, but both are evasions. Augustine forgot that the patient ox may have sore eyes. I noted in my first lecture his African callousness to the sufferings of the brute creation. You may perhaps look further for an explanation ; there is some depth of meaning in his remark that body, as such, is incapable of misery.[3] But he had a broader and more general solution of these difficulties. It is our perception that is at fault. Our range of vision is so narrow that we cannot trace the plan of goodness. There is in the dialogue *De Ordine* a fine simile of an excessively short-sighted man examining a tessellated pavement ; he can see only two or three fragments of marble, apparently thrown down at random, and can make nothing of the pattern.[4]

Augustine was convinced that the world was well ordered, but he held this rather by an act of faith in God than by experience. Yet, even so, he could exult in the visible splendour of nature. His dreary censure of the *Epistula Fundamenti* is relieved by a vivid chapter in which he sets against the horrors

[1] *De Lib. Arbitr.* iii. 14, *ut supra.*

[2] *De Nat. Boni*, p. 38. 'Nam nec ipse ignis aeternus, qui cruciaturus est impios, mala natura est, habens modum et speciem et ordinem suum nulla iniquitate deprauatum, sed cruciatus est damnatis malum, quorum peccatis est debitus. Neque enim et lux ista, quia lippos cruciat oculos, mala natura est.'

[3] *De Lib. Arb.* iii. 9. 'Nulla autem corpora, quantum ad sese attinet, uel beata possunt esse uel misera, quanquam beatorum aut miserorum corpora possunt esse.'

[4] *De Ordine*, i. 1.

of the material world depicted by the Manichæan the countervailing beauties and the joyous aspects of nature. 'I join with you,' he says, 'in all your fault-finding; join with me in the praise of all good things.'[1] For the sake of argument he could vituperate *uitia naturalia* taken by themselves, but the world should be looked at as a whole and it would be found magnificent. Apart from controversy he could expatiate more freely on the beauty of nature. He would show how the truth and goodness of God exceed all our human experience, and to heighten the comparison he makes the most of this. 'You love what is good;' he says, 'for good is the earth with its towering mountains and rolling hills and wide stretches of plain; good and pleasant is the fruitful meadow; good is a well-ordered house, roomy and lightsome; good are living bodies, good the temperate and wholesome air, good is savoury and health-giving food, good is health itself without pain or weakness; good is the face of man, comely and cheerful and richly coloured; good is the soul of a friend in pleasant comradeship and faithful love; good is a righteous man; good is wealth and its convenience; good is the sky with sun and moon and stars; good are the angels in their holy obedience; good is human speech, informing and moving the hearer; good are the tuneful numbers and the sense of poetry.'[2]

Omnis natura bonum est. We come back to that. Cosmic evil is a possibility, because created things are mutable and may fall away from their proper good; but seek it in fact and you will not find it.

[1] *Contra Ep. Fund.* 31. [2] *De Trinitate*, viii. 3.

God is not only *bonus creator*; he is also *iustissimus ordinator*. His mercy is over all his works; all are ordered meetly, the *rerum natura* is good, and God can rejoice in his works to the uttermost.[1]

Is this conclusion dazing? Does it reduce all our questions and answers to nonsense? We have watched Augustine dealing with the common experience of evil in the world, and struggling with its problems; we have noted his careful adhesion to fact, his stern rejection of explanations which explain things away, his uncompromising realism. For him, I have said, things are what they are, and are for the most part what they seem. Yet now he seems to drive us to the conclusion that evil is the nothing from which it springs, a sick fancy, a misreading of nature.

But has he eliminated evil? No. There is one check on his optimism; there remains something *contra naturam*. There is the fact of sin. Created wills can fall away perversely from their proper good, and do fall. When all other evil is eliminated from nature, this remains. The discordance of *uitia naturalia* may be resolved into the harmony of the world; sin alone and its consequences are obstinately evil. 'Hoc est totum quod dicitur malum, peccatum et poena peccati.'[2] This remains to be examined. The examination may reveal the cause of the prejudice that finds evil in the course of nature.

[1] Plotinus came close to this relative optimism. While evil is ἔλλειψις τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, it is to be observed that τὸ ἐλλεῖπον ὀλίγον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ is not evil, but only ὅταν παντελῶς ἐλλείπῃ ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἡ ὕλη, i.e. abstract matter, τὸ ὅλως κακόν. *Ennead.* i. 8, 5 and 15. But Augustine would be repelled by this, and he probably reached his conclusion by independent reasoning.

[2] *De Uera Rel.* 12.

LECTURE VI

SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

'NEC ipsius diaboli natura, in quantum natura est, malum est.'[1] Here also, in the typical evil one, Augustine finds the goodness of nature surviving. This particular nature is not in good estate; there is a balancing statement added: 'sed peruersitas eam malam facit.' The typical sinner is therefore at once both good and evil; good in respect of nature, evil in respect of the perversion of nature; 'nec malum unquam potest esse ullum ubi bonum est nullum.'[2]

Sin, as we have seen, is the only *malum* which Augustine will definitely recognize as such—sin and its consequences. We have to ascertain the place of this evil in Augustine's conception of nature.

He attempts many definitions of sin. He was severely Platonic, as I have remarked, in the early work *De Utilitate Credendi*: 'Omne factum, si recte factum non est, peccatum est,' and that is not rightly done 'quod non a recta ratione proficiscitur.'

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xix. 13. Cf. *De Vera Rel.* 13. 'Nec aliquid sanctificatis malus angelus oberit, qui diabolus dicitur; quia et ipse, in quantum angelus est, non est malus, sed in quantum peruersus propria uoluntate.'

[2] *Enchir.* 13.

The consequence is boldly drawn: 'Solus igitur sapiens non peccat.'[1] That, however, is not a true definition. Here is one drawn from the same thought: 'Peccatum est factum uel dictum uel concupitum aliquid contra aeternam legem,' *lex aeterna* being then identified as *ratio diuina*.[2] But this will be found too large; it will include acts which are not properly voluntary, and it was of paramount importance with Augustine from first to last to maintain 'peccatum nusquam esse nisi in uoluntate.'[3] In later years he had to defend that judgment against misrepresentation, but he stood by it. The will must have a place in every true definition of sin. You find it in the definition of human perverseness as 'fruendis uti uelle atque utendis frui.'[4] He makes will the prime factor when he sets down the formal definition: 'Peccatum est uoluntas retinendi uel consequendi quod iustitia uetat et unde liberum est abstinere.'[5] He draws this from no recondite source; it is not given by obscure revelation; it is what 'omnis mens apud se diuinitus conscriptum legit.' It rests on the sufficient testimony of the human conscience.

Sin is here taken in the abstract. For practical purposes some modification of the definition will be necessary. The stress laid on the will, for example, seems to support the Stoic doctrine of the equality of all sins, against which Augustine contended laboriously in a long letter to Jerome.[6] On the other hand, the condition of freedom introduced into the definition raises a peculiar difficulty. Will and

[1] *De Util. Cred.* 12; *supra*, 100.
[2] *Contra Faustum*, xxii. 27.
[3] *De Duab. Anim.* 10.
[4] *Qu. lxxxiii.* 30.
[5] *De Duab. Anim.* 11.
[6] *Ep.* clxvii. 2.

freedom are here distinguished. There is a sense in which they are inseparable: *liberum arbitrium* is a necessary condition of *uoluntas*. But while the internal operation of the will is free, or it would not be will, external action according to the determination of the will may be impossible; or, conversely, action may be imposed by constraint without the determination of the will, and perhaps contrary to it. Augustine is concerned to establish the principle that no action done under constraint, however vile or injurious, is properly sinful. Therefore he interposes the difference, 'unde liberum est abstinere.' But if this be pressed, a consequence will ensue which he certainly did not intend. It will follow that neither consent of the will to an action done under compulsion, nor the determination of the will to an action which is forcibly restrained, can be sinful. But we shall see presently that the sinfulness of consent to an act which cannot be avoided is a cardinal point in Augustine's treatment of one problem of sin,[1] and his theory of omnipotence requires the assumption that evil wills are sooner or later reduced to impotence by restraint of the divine government of the world.[2] We must therefore understand the condition, 'unde liberum est abstinere,' only in a negative sense. An act done under constraint is not sinful, but freedom from external constraint is not a necessary condition of sin. 'Quicquid uis et non potes, factum Deus computat.'[3] In saying that, Augustine does but conform to the canons of all ethical judgment. It is a platitude. The one

[1] *Infra*, pp. 127, *seqq*.
[2] *Supra*, p. 58.
[3] *In Psalm. lvii.* 3.

essential element in sin is *mala uoluntas*. We have seen that Augustine disallowed the search for any cause behind this. It is *spontaneus defectus a bono*.[1] There is nothing more to be said. Do not suppose that he is here riding the high horse of *a priori* assumption. He depends entirely upon practical reasoning. He is quite pragmatic. Sin is what the human conscience condemns. He argues from the case of a sleeping man whose hand is made to transcribe something vile. You cannot condemn the man; he himself has no uneasy conscience; why? Because he has not consented to the deed.[2] Not the deed, but the will behind the deed, is sin. And behind the will there is nothing. It is ultimate.

But the will is from God. Why was man thus created? When he has eliminated all other evil from nature, Augustine has to face this; man is naturally capable of evil will. Why?

The pressure of the question was perhaps the heavier upon him because of the sharp distinction that he drew between man and the rest of the animal creation. He could recognize created will in angels, demons, and men: nowhere else. Brute beasts, he held, are innocent because incapable of choice between good and evil, and therefore incapable of sin. Viewing the distinction broadly, we can follow him here. Passing from one level of life to another, we can see that new conditions are reached, new powers and new responsibilities. But we do not find it so easy to mark the turning-point. Even if we shrink from saying with Bergson that the first appearance

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 6; *Contra Iulian.* i. 8. *Supra*, p. 56.
[2] *De Duab. An.* 10.

of life involves indetermination, and that slight changes of contour in the amœba are the result of an act of will, we may still acknowledge rudimentary movements of a spontaneous kind in various forms of life; thence we pass by insensible degrees to animals which seem incontestably to exercise a certain power of deliberate choice, and we are compelled to compare these gradations with those of the human embryo and the child. Augustine took no account of these refinements. He could not escape the appeal of unconscious infancy, but he disposed of it by the analogy of sleep; human intelligence is there in full measure, but is not yet awakened.[1] The denial of a rudimentary conscience to horse or dog diminishes that continuity of nature which Augustine maintained, and makes the problem of sin the more abrupt. The defectibility of man may, indeed, be brought under the general head of a natural tendency *in nihilum*, but that kind of mutability has been explained as not involving evil; man has a proper good, a natural endowment, to depart from which is sin, an evil incontestable; he is naturally capable of this evil, and even inclined to it, if the tendency *in nihilum* is for all created things a natural tendency. Optimism fails here. How shall we account for this natural tendency to evil?

Augustine was not usually disposed to attempt an answer when a question seemed to impugn the sovranty of God. It is useless, not to say impertinent,

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxii. 24. 'Ipse itaque animae humanae mentem dedit, ubi ratio et intellegentia in infante sopita est quodam modo, quasi nulla sit, excitanda scilicet atque exserenda aetatis accessu, qua sit scientiae capax atque doctrinae et habilis perceptioni ueritatis et amoris boni.'

to ask why nature is what it is. But he could occasionally stoop or rise to such speculation, and then he guessed pretty much as others have guessed. 'It seems to me,' he says, 'that man would not have had much to boast of in leading a good life merely because there was none to lead him astray.'[1] This apology for the existence of a tempter covers the whole case of the possibility of sin. It is of a piece with his vigorous assertion of the superiority of sinful man to the sinless ox. Sin is possible in order that man may achieve the honour of abstaining from it. *Posse non peccare* is the glory of human freedom.

This argument is based on the dignity of man according to the purpose of creation. But under stress of polemic Augustine tried another apology. He stumbled on what he read in Isaiah: 'Ego facio bona et condo mala.'[2] The Manichæans made play with it in their polemic against the Old Testament; he retorted on them the words of St. Paul: 'Quisquis templum Dei corruperit, corrumpet eum Deus.'[3] He defended this reading by reference to the Greek. Then God is in some sense the author of corruption. In what sense? Augustine answers that God did not indeed make man corruptible, but made him in such sort that, if he corrupted himself, he might be handed over to corruption as a penalty.[4]

[1] *De Gen. ad Lit.* xi. 4. 'Non mihi uidetur magnae laudis futurum fuisse hominem, si propterea posset bene uiuere quia nemo male suaderet.'

[2] *Is.* xlv. 7. In the Vulgate, 'Ego Dominus, et non est alter, formans lucem et creans tenebras, faciens pacem et creans malum.'

[3] 1 *Cor.* iii. 17. Vulgate: 'Si quis autem templum Dei uiolauerit, disperdet illum Deus.'

[4] *Contra Ep. Fundamenti*, 38–9.

There, you may think, you see him at his worst: ingenious, unconvincing, repulsive. It comes to this, that God made man capable of sinning, in order that he might reap the fruits of sin. That thought is intolerable; Augustine was caught in an evil snare of controversial exegesis.

But it will not do so to dismiss the judgment of such a man. It is probable that what repels will be found to have a close relation to important truths; he may be struggling with a profundity in which he has lost his footing. The Roman tendency to regard justice, including penal justice, as an end in itself seems to be making itself felt. But I am rather disposed to seek another explanation of this strange conception of the divine purpose. There can be no doubt that here, as elsewhere, Augustine started from the facts of human life. It is a fact, obvious alike to the intensity of St. Paul and to the frivolity of Ovid, that I approve certain acts as good, desire to do them, purpose to do them, but do otherwise. 'Uideo meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.' But if I thus fail to do my own will, how shall I be blamed? Yet the common sense of mankind blames me, and my conscience consents to the condemnation. What then becomes of the doctrine that sin is an act of the will? Augustine had two answers, which he did not reduce to consistency, though he wrote them on the same page. On the one hand he found in this impotence of the will an element of slothful consent, attested by the slowness of men to lay hold on the succours of grace when offered. On the other hand he traced the cause of it to sin previously indulged; sin breeds a sinful habit, and so an incapacity for

avoiding sin is a guilty state, the guilt of which proceeds from the original act that was done in the state of freedom.[1]

The former reply prepared for Augustine some difficulties in the Pelagian controversy; the latter was probably at all times more in accordance with his mind, and became one of his most characteristic doctrines. Sinfulness is the penalty of sin. It is an evil habit; and so you arrive at the reduction of all evil to the twofold head, *peccatum et poena peccati.*

This theory of penalty must be examined. There is an obvious difficulty on the threshold. If this state of weakness be a penalty ordained by the divine justice, how can it be called evil? You will remember that when it is a question of external penalties—of hell-fire, for example—he insists that they are good in themselves, as befits the ordinance of God, and become evil to those who suffer because of their own corrupted nature: they are as sunshine to sore eyes.[2] But now we are concerned with that interior state itself which turns good things to evil. It is good, because just, he will say, that the sinner should be thrown into that state. At times he advances the proposition that all punishment is good; it is no more evil than any other dark passage of nature, forming an integral part of the beautiful harmony of creation.[3]

[1] *De Lib. Arb.* iii. 18–19. [2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xii. 4. *Supra*, p. 112.

[3] *De Uera Rel.* 23. 'Neque de peccatis poenisque eius animae efficitur ut uniuersitas ulla deformitate turpetur; quia rationalis substantia, quae ab omni peccato munda est, Deo subiecta, subiectis sibi ceteris dominatur; ea uero, quae peccauit, ibi ordinata est ubi esse tales decet, ut Deo conditore atque rectore uniuersitatis decora sint omnia. Et est pulcritudo uniuersae creaturae per haec tria inculpabilis, damnationem peccatorum, exercitationem iustorum, perfectionem beatorum.'

If he had been able to regard all punishment as corrective,[1] he would have been clear of the difficulty ; he knew, and defended, the value of *correptio*, and he might have brought *poena* by the same way into the category of good ; but he treated the impotence which is the penalty of sin, not as a means of correction, but as itself needing the correction of grace. It is itself called sin, though with some impropriety of language. It is our shame, he says, that the flesh is not subject to our rule, for this rebellion is due to the weakness that we have earned by sinning, and so it is called ' the sin that dwelleth in our members.' [2] It is a standing corruption of nature, and is so far permanent that it becomes a kind of second nature. ' Consuetudo in naturam uersa est.' [3] One of Augustine's most emphatic sayings on this head occurs, not in controversy or in a formal treatise, but by way of casual reference in the commentary on the Psalms : ' Natura nobis facta est poena.' [4] Here also he makes the most of the sense of *poena* : the result is *ex uindicta*. It is, indeed, a natural consequence, ' illum enim praecedens meruit ista sequentia ; ' [5] to fall away by one's own choice from good is to become evil by one's own act, but the control of all natural courses by the originating will of the Creator

[1] He expressly repudiates this, *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxi. 13, and elsewhere. When he writes ' ut peccati dedecus emendet poena peccati ' (*De Lib. Arbitr.* iii. 9), he is thinking of the harmony of nature.

[2] *De Peccatorum Meritis*, ii. 22. ' Nobis pudendum est quod imperio nostro caro non seruit, quia hoc fit per infirmitatem quam peccando meruimus, uocaturque peccatum habitans in membris nostris. Sic est autem hoc peccatum ut sit poena peccati.'

[3] *De Fide et Symbolo*, 11. [4] *In Ps. xxxvii.*

[5] *De Lib. Arb.* iii. 19.

necessitates the acceptance of the result as in some sort an act of God. 'Ego facio bona et condo mala.' There were practical perils as well as intellectual difficulties in this point of view. If the result is in any way an act of God, why struggle against it? The thought may induce an irresponsible acquiescence in sin as complete as that which followed logically from Manichæan necessity. The induction was made; Augustine frankly recognized the zeal of Pelagius, at the outset of his controversy, against those who sought a defence for their sins in the plea of human infirmity.[1] The persistent evil of antinomianism was evidently pushing forward under the shelter of Augustine's doctrine.

What cover did he afford? Looking back at the end of his life to the definition of sin upon which I have been working, he saw that the 'uoluntas retinendi uel consequendi' might in the penal state of sinfulness be more accurately distinguished as *cupiditas*.[2] If *uoluntas*, it was perverted. But there is no entire perversion of the will, for that would mean the destruction of human nature. There is, therefore, in fallen man a conflict of wills; or, to speak more precisely, a conflict between *uoluntas*, continuing in its natural goodness, and that which he calls indiscriminately *cupiditas*, *concupiscentia*, and *libido*.

[1] *De Natura et Gratia*, 1. 'Uidi hominem zelo ardentissimo accensum aduersus eos qui, cum in suis peccatis humanam uoluntatem debeant accusare, naturam potius accusantes hominum per illam se excusare conantur.' *Ibid.* p. 7: 'Quanto igitur zelo accensus est libri huius, quem misistis, conditor aduersus eos qui peccatis suis patrocinium de naturae humanae infirmitate perquirunt, tanto et multo ardentiore zelo nos oportet accendi, ne euacuetur crux Christi.'

[2] *Retract.* i. 15.

He observed with great accuracy that our bodily movements are controlled partly by the natural force of will, partly by these perverted impulses. And further, no movements of the body are in themselves sinful; the fleshly appetites are in themselves natural and good; even those which are habitually associated with sin would have had their proper exercise, he says, if man had remained unfallen.[1] But more; even in our fallen state all human actions are still good in so far as they are natural. If a lame man sets out to do a good deed, the deed is not the less good because he halts by the way.[2] That is Augustine's matured judgment, found in an antipelagian treatise. I think he says somewhere—but I cannot recover the place—that in an act of murder the skill and strength with which the knife is driven home are good; the evil is only in the perverted will directing their use.

There are, then, three sources of human action to be reckoned with: the corporal appetites, which are natural and good; the naturally good will, by which the appetites ought to be directed and controlled; and the perversion of will, which is concupiscence. But it may then be contended that the

[1] *De Nupt. et Concupisc.* i. 1. 'Pudenda concupiscentia nulla esset, nisi homo ante peccasset, nuptiae uero essent, etiam si nemo peccasset; fieret quippe sine isto morbo seminatio filiorum in corpore uitae illius, sine quo nunc fieri non potest in corpore mortis huius.' Cf. *De Ciuit. Dei*, xiv. 21: 'Amissa potestate cui corpus ex omni parte seruiebat.'

[2] *Ibid.* i. 7: 'Tanquam si quispiam pede uitiato ad aliquod bonum etiam claudicando perueniat, nec propter claudicationis malum mala est illa peruentio, nec propter illius peruentionis bonum bona est claudicatio: ita nec propter libidinis malum nuptias condemnare nec propter nuptiarum bonum libidinem laudare debemus.'

man himself, the responsible person, is represented by the natural appetites and the natural will, which remain good. St. Paul may seem to imply as much when he says: 'The good that I would I do not.' The perverted will, concupiscence or lust, becomes something not himself, an evil power in him against which he vainly struggles, and for the works of which he is not answerable. In a critical letter to Vitalis of Carthage, Augustine did not shrink from saying that as a consequence of sin man lies 'sub potestate tenebrarum.'[1] He made much of this enslavement. Facing relentlessly the apostolic teaching about 'bond-servants of corruption,' he asks what freedom they enjoy except when of their own pleasure they do evil.[2] This was not mere theory or dialectic. He was drawing upon his own experience. In the first book *de Libero Arbitrio* you will find a graphic description of the state of captivity.[3] Elsewhere he treats it as a diminution of the reasoning faculty, by which man is brought down to brutishness.[4] But in that case does not responsibility for sin disappear? Is there sin at all? What becomes of the words *unde liberum est abstinere* in the definition? Augustine did in set terms avow that there is for fallen man a *dura necessitas*.[5] In a work which he left unfinished because he was dissatisfied with it, he went so far as to say that there are in man's fallen state 'peccata naturalia quae necesse est committi.'[6] That shows what thoughts were troubling him long before the pressure of the Pelagian controversy

[1] *Ep.* ccxvii. 3.
[2] *Enchirid.* 30.
[3] *De Lib. Arb.* i. 11.
[4] *De Gen. contra Manich.* i. 20.
[5] *Retract.* i. 1.
[6] *De Genes. Imperf.* 1.

began. Pelagius himself he condemned from the first for saying that the human will could *naturali possibilitate* avoid sin;[1] in other words, that *posse non peccare* still holds good. You may say, he retorts, that a man sound on his feet has the power of walking, but do not say it of a man with broken legs.[2] That is reasonable; but is it reasonable to blame the poor wretch for not walking? What becomes of the further responsibility of fallen man?

It was this crucial question, arising out of the most practical considerations, that drove Augustine to his theory of *poena peccati*. As we have seen, he did not consistently put this forward as the only answer. The fact of the enslavement of man by the sinful habit he took to be indisputable; the fact of man's continued responsibility he took to be equally unassailable; both facts were verified by experience and by conscience; a theory correlating the facts was of minor importance. But he cast about for such a theory. We shall probably go with him readily enough when he insists on the remnant of freedom with which the man consents to his degrading servitude, or on his neglect of the succours of grace.[3] This explanation appears even in the antipelagian treatises. 'God does not command impossibilities,' he says, 'but bids you do what you can and ask for what is beyond your power.'[4] That

[1] *Ep.* cclxxviii.

[2] *De Nat. et Grat.* 49. 'De homine sanis pedibus tolerabiliter dici potest, "Uelit, nolit, habet ambulandi possibilitatem;" confractis uero, etsi uelit, non habet. Uitiata est natura de qua loquitur.'

[3] *Supra*, pp. 52, 117.

[4] *De Nat. et Grat.* 43.

recalls the great cry of weakness passing into strength : 'Da quod iubes et iube quod uis.'[1] It is not to be denied that this touch of optimism conflicts with much that he says about the distribution of grace according to the divine predestination ; but you must not look for consistency there, and it is worthy of note that in the Retractations he harks back to the notion of succour as a gift to be had for the asking. He there places the will 'sub dominante cupiditate,' but only 'nisi forte si pia est ut oret auxilium.' In so far as this is done, he adds, 'in tantum liberata est.'[2] But it must be allowed that he leans more usually to the other explanation of responsibility. The enslavement of the will is a penal state, an infirmity 'quam peccando meruimus,' and so, if the sinner's responsibility for a particular sin is consequently diminished, he is yet responsible for the original loss of power. But that leaves over the vexed question of birth-sin, to which we must presently return.

Before we tackle this, however, there is something else to be considered. St. Augustine's doctrine of grace lies outside my proper limits. He did not exactly set grace over against nature ; indeed he accused Pelagius, rather unfairly, of doing this ;[3] but he sharply distinguished the two conceptions. In the formal complaint which he and his African colleagues addressed to Innocent of Rome, Pelagius was more accurately accused of identifying nature

[1] *Confess.* x. 29. [2] *Retract.* i. 15.

[3] *Retract.* ii. 42. 'Hominis naturam contra Dei gratiam, qua iustificatur impius et qua Christiani sumus, quanta potuit argumentatione defendit.'

and grace, 'quae non est natura.'[1] It was in part a question of the use of words; Pelagius might have alleged the authority of Cicero for saying that *gratia* means the general providence and benevolence of God,[2] but Augustine with good reason insisted on using the word in a specific Christian sense. It is that 'qua Christiani sumus.' It is to be distinguished from the natural providence of God: 'non est natura, sed qua saluatur natura.' But if you would enter into the mind of St. Augustine, you must not make it a superadded endowment. It is a remedy for the disorder of sin. 'Gratia Dei est qua nobis donantur peccata ut reconciliemur Deo.'[3] Room is left for supralapsarian theories, for Thomist and Scotist controversy; Augustine himself is concerned only with saving grace. You may call this healing influence supernatural in the sense that it lies entirely beyond the scope of man's natural powers; that is emphatically asserted, and the fault of Pelagius was to obscure if not to deny the limitation; but for reasons which I have given it seems to me unwise to use the word in connexion with St. Augustine's teaching. He keeps the operation of grace within the ambit of nature. It is the revival of human freedom; it is the restoration of the integrity of human nature.

[1] *Ep.* clxxvii. 6. 'Ne nimium essemus onerosi, signa fecimus his locis, ubi petimus inspicere non graueris, quem ad modum sibi obiecta quaestione quod gratiam Dei negaret, ita respondit ut eam esse non diceret nisi naturam in qua nos condidit Deus. Si autem hunc esse suum librum negat aut eadem in libro loca, non contendimus; anathematizet ea, et illam confiteatur apertissime gratiam quam doctrina Christiana demonstrat et praedicat esse propriam Christianorum, quae non est natura sed qua saluatur natura.'

[2] *De Nat. Deorum*, i. 43. 'Epicurus uero ex animis hominum extraxit radicitus religionem, cum dis inmortalibus et opem et gratiam sustulit.'

[3] *Expos. Ep. ad Galatas*, i. 3.

But there is one exception to this which I must notice, because it may raise a doubt whether after all he meant by liberty anything which can reasonably be so called. As we have seen, *posse non peccare* was for him the crown of the original freedom of human nature. But in his later writings you will find a frequent insistence on the strange paradox that supreme liberty is *non posse peccare*, and this he assumes to be the final work of grace. But how can *non posse* be a note of liberty? It is useless to say that true freedom is freedom to do what is right, for that is the condition of the inanimate and the brute creation, which has no choice, no *liberum arbitrium*. Augustine may have been influenced by the Platonic conception of the two inclinations of the soul, towards the things of reason and towards the things of sense, from which it follows that a man is truly free only when he moves in the one direction without being hampered by the contrary inclination. There seems to be a glance at this notion when he says that the soul, delivered from this present misery, will be *semper sapiens*.[1] But I think that he was brought to his conception of *non posse peccare* partly by a sheer paralogism. He thought of liberty for fallen man in the passive sense of enfranchisement from the domination of concupiscence. He wrote passionately to Vitalis of Carthage that anyone who opposes the doctrine of grace must be willing his own captivity.[2]

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xi. 10.

[2] *Ep.* ccxviii. 3. 'Si uere uolumus defendere liberum arbitrium, non oppugnemus unde fit liberum. Nam qui oppugnat gratiam qua nostrum ad declinandum a malo et faciendum bonum liberatur arbitrium ipse arbitrium suum adhuc uult esse captiuum.'

'Liberata est,' and only so can the human will be rightly called *uoluntas*. Now it is obvious that such enfranchisement will be the more complete if there is no fear, no possibility of falling back into servitude. 'Multo liberius erit arbitrium,' he says, 'quod omnino non poterit seruire peccato.'[1] In this sense, yes; but he confuses two kinds of liberty: internal freedom, and deliverance from an external domination. In the hard dialectic of the unpleasant treatise *De Correptione et Gratia* the two are put side by side without any perception of their disparity: 'Prima libertas uoluntatis erat posse non peccare; nouissima erit multo maior, non posse peccare.'[2] Yet from this false identification Augustine was carried forward to a sublime thought. The end of the City of God is the eternal felicity of the redeemed and their indefectible union with God. God cannot sin; neither can they: God is free; so too are they.[3] One shrinks from criticism of such rapture, and yet I must say that Augustine runs a grave risk in thus comparing a creaturely *non posse peccare* with the divine. For *posse peccare* is precisely the possibility of falling away from God. Deliverance from that risk of freedom may be described with strict accuracy as a supernatural work of grace, not indeed as raising man to a state of absolute supernature, but relatively as removing him out of his proper condition in nature.

[1] *Enchiridion*, 28. [2] *De Correp. et Grat.* 12.

[3] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xxii. 30. 'Certe Deus ipse numquid quia peccare non potest, ideo liberum arbitrium habere negandus est? Erit ergo illius ciuitatis et una in omnibus et inseparabilis in singulis uoluntas libera, ab omni malo liberata et impleta omni bono, fruens indeficienter aeternorum iucunditate gaudiorum, oblita culparum, oblita poenarum, nec tamen ideo suae liberationis oblita ut liberatori suo sit ingrata.'

It is something additional to the restoration of natural liberty. But does it leave man free? Freedom of the will stands in the absence of any absolutely dominant motive; if the Love of God be such a motive, does freedom remain? There is something in Jeremy Taylor's remark that freedom is an imperfection, a state of weakness. *Non posse peccare* may be the supreme beatitude of man, but I think that Augustine was ill-advised in trying to make out that it is freedom. The attempt throws a doubt on the sincerity of his vindication of human freedom under other conditions, a doubt which is resolved only at the expense of his consistency in the use of words.

To return from these heights, we find him maintaining that the effect of sin is a loss of freedom, not complete, but sufficient to make the sinner unable always and entirely to resist the impulse of appetite. Surveying mankind as a whole, Augustine saw that this enslavement did not affect individuals alone; the *uniuersa massa* was suffering disablement.[1] Shall we then say that sin was become a power in the world? Augustine's language about the helplessness of man lent a handle to those who accused him of building again the dualism which he had destroyed. How can that which has no substantial existence dominate that which has? If sin be dominant, where is the omnipotence of God? He has two answers.

In the first place the omnipotence of God is seen in the judgment of sin. He is 'malarum uoluntatum iustissimus ordinator.'[2] Sinners do not escape, and by the overruling of Providence their perverseness turns to their own ruin. 'Si his bonis quisque

[1] *De Nat. et Grat.* 5. [2] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xi. 17.

male uti uoluerit, nec sic uincit Dei uoluntatem, qui etiam iniustos iuste ordinare nouit: ut si ipsi per iniquitatem uoluntatis suae male usi fuerint bonis illius, ille per iustitiam potestatis suae bene utatur malis ipsorum, recte ordinans in poenis qui se peruerse ordinauerunt in peccatis.'[1] Augustine was able to think of punishment as restoring the balance of nature disturbed by ill-doing. Suffering follows guilt, the natural order is justified, and he is content; 'non est peruersum,' he says, 'imo conuenientissimum et ordinatissimum apparet.'[2] The hardness of the Roman temper is there. All men are in the same tale, and 'iuste utique damnantur, quia sine peccato non sunt.'[3] So the omnipotence of God and the impotence of sin are asserted. The fire of hell is like the sunlight that tortures sore eyes; it is glorious and splendid, 'habens modum et speciem et ordinem suum, nulla iniquitate deprauatum;'[4] so the punishment of sinners, which is an evil to them, is good in the whole order of the universe. Dante learnt of Augustine the inscription of Hell-gate:—

> Fecemi la divina potestate,
> La somma sapienza, e 'l primo amore.

But at this rate *poena peccati* will soon cease to be *malum*.

There is another answer, perhaps more to our taste: 'nulli naturae nocere peccata nisi sua.'[5] Augustine

[1] *De Nat. Boni*, p. 37. Cf. *Ep.* cxlix. 2: 'Sicut illorum nequitiae est male uti bonis operibus eius, sic illius sapientiae est bene uti malis operibus eorum.'

[2] *De Lib. Arb.* iii. 20, where the extreme case of inherited guilt is in question.

[3] *De Nat. et Grat.* 4. [4] *De Nat. Boni*, 38; *supra*, p. 112.

[5] *De Gen. contra Manich.* ii. 29; cf. *Retract.* i. 10; *infra*, p. 139.

frequently insists that the sinner cannot really upset the counsel of God, cannot bring any accident to the divine nature, or hinder the fulfilment of the divine will, cannot prevent God from bringing good out of evil.[1] And if sin does not disturb the order of nature, it can hurt none but the soul that sins. The sinner injures himself, and none else; he brings himself alone under the tyranny of sinful habit. But that hardly seems to be in accord with experience. What is the meaning of temptation? In the Retractations Augustine desperately argued that he who wrongs a righteous man does not really injure him, but rather adds to his reward in heaven.[2]

This brings us to a grave question, the last that I shall raise. Men are born in sin. What shall we make of that? How can a new-born child lie under guilt, and be liable to the penalty of sin? The pressure of the question upon the mind of Augustine is revealed in his eager request for help from Jerome. 'Tell me,' he wrote, 'pray tell me what sin there is in the little ones that they should need remission by the sacrament of Christ. Or if they do not sin, by what justice are they tied to the sin of another, so as to be damned if the Church does not come to their aid? So many thousands of souls lost by the death of babes without baptism, what equity is here?'[3]

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xi. 17, xiv. 11; *In Psalm.* cx.; *Enchirid.* 24.

[2] *Retract.* i. 10.

[3] *Ep.* clxvi. 4. 'Doce ergo, quaeso, quod doceam, doce quod teneam, et dic mihi, si animae singillatim singulis hodieque nascentibus fiunt, ubi in paruulis peccent ut indigeant in sacramento Christi remissione peccati peccantes in Adam ex quo caro est propagata peccati, aut, si non peccant, qua iustitia creatoris ita peccato obligantur alieno, cum exinde propagatis membris mortalibus inseruntur, ut eas, nisi per ecclesiam subuentum

I extract the marrow of his questions, without the guarding expressions, to show how keenly he was aware of the moral difficulties of the case. He was putting them only as they arise in the face of one theory of the origin of the soul, but they are there for all theories.

It is important to bear in mind that we are concerned here with *poena peccati*, not with *peccatum* properly so called. It is only by a sort of metonymy that the infirmity or corruption of nature is called sin. But this distinction affords no help, for such corruption is due to antecedent sin, and in the case of these children there is an imputation of guilt. That was precisely what was being called in question. When he made this eager appeal to Jerome, Augustine was already engaged with the Pelagian heresy, which he identified as a denial of the guilt remitted in the baptism of infants.[1] He did not hesitate to call this guilt *peccatum originale*.

What is the basis of the doctrine of original sin? It is twofold. First, there is the authority of the Church, exhibited not only in formal doctrine but still more in the practice of religion. Augustine met the Pelagians at every point with the fact that

fuerit, damnatio consequatur, cum in earum potestate non sit ut eis possit gratia baptismi subueniri. Tot igitur animarum milia, quae in mortibus paruulorum sine indulgentia Christiani sacramenti de corporibus exeunt, qua aequitate damnantur, si nouae creatae nullo suo praecedente peccato sed uoluntate creatoris singulae singulis nascentibus adhaeserunt, quibus eas animandis ille creauit et dedit, qui utique nouerat quod unaquaeque earum nulla sua culpa sine baptismo Christi de corpore fuerat exitura?'

[1] *Ep.* 3. 'Qui modo noua quaedam garrire coeperunt, dicentes nullum reatum esse ex Adam tractum qui per baptismum in infante soluatur.'

infants were held to be in need of redemption. That would be meaningless if they were not in the power of sin. They were baptized for the remission of sin. That would be meaningless if they were not guilty.[1] As an *argumentum ad hominem* this certainly did not lack force, for the Pelagians claimed to be Catholic Christians, and were committed to the practice of the Catholic Church. But for Augustine to argue thus was much more than to score a point in debate. The authority of the Catholic Church was for him one of the great facts of life. Other facts also were adducible in corroboration. The second basis of the doctrine is the observed fact that infants suffer some of the consequences of sin.[2] Here, as always, you find him to the best of his ability holding fast to the realities of life. The facts being observed, he will not tolerate any attempt to escape from them.

[1] Quotation is hardly necessary, but two passages out of many may be cited. *De Peccat. Meritis*, i. 18: 'Christus pro impiis mortuus est. Isti autem qui, ut manifestum est, nihil in sua propria uita impie commiserunt, si nec originaliter ullo impietatis uinculo detinentur, quomodo pro eis mortuus est qui pro impiis mortuus est? Si nulla originalis peccati aegritudine sauciati sunt, quomodo ad medicum Christum, hoc est ad percipiendum sacramentum salutis aeternae, suorum curantium pio timore portantur?' *De Nuptiis et Concup.* ii. 32: 'Ipse dicit, "Quo modo rei sunt paruuli pro quibus Christus mortuus est?" Nos respondemus, Imo paruuli quo modo rei non sunt pro quibus Christus mortuus est?'

[2] *De Peccat. Meritis*, iii. 10: 'Si anima non est ex traduce ergo quae ista iustitia est ut recens creata et ab omni delicto prorsus inmunis, ab omni peccati contagione penitus libera, passiones carnis diuersosque cruciatus et, quod est horribilius, etiam daemonum incursus in paruulis sustinere cogatur? Neque enim aliquid horum caro sic patitur ut non ibi anima potius, quae uiuit et sentit, poenas luat.' Observe that he is not defending the traducian theory, but he follows Pelagius in putting the case. Compare the curious study of infantile faults in *Confess.* i. 7.

To theorize about the facts, to account for them, is another matter. It may be impossible, but it can be tried. Augustine made the attempt. His consciousness of the difficulty of the task is revealed in his trial of three inconsistent explanations.

He was at first inclined to put all down to heredity. When man was fallen, he says, it was not equitable that he should generate offspring in better condition than himself.[1] The puzzling question of the origin of the soul was here embarrassing, and conversely he could urge this difficulty as a reason for suspending judgment upon it.[2] Here it was that he sought in vain the help of Jerome. He had himself laboured in early days to show that even if the soul is not derived, like the body, from parental substance, the weakness which it acquires by union with the body is a misfortune consistent with creative goodness. On no other occasion did he come so near to affording an avenue of approach for the Pelagian heresy. The soul, he suggested, may be joined to the body, which is born in a corrupt state, for the express purpose of rising to higher things; only if that duty be left undone will it share the guilt and degradation of the flesh.[3]

[1] *De Libero Arb.* iii. 20; 'Non enim damnato primo homine sic adempta est beatitudo ut etiam fecunditas adimeretur. Poterat enim et de prole eius, quamuis carnali et mortali, aliquod in suo genere fieri decus ornamentumque terrarum. Iam uero ut meliores gigneret quam ipse esset non erat aequitatis.'

[2] *De Anima et eius Origine*, i. 13.

[3] *De Libero Arb.* iii. 20: 'Non enim mediocria bona sunt non solum quod anima est, qua natura iam omne corpus praecedit, sed etiam quod facultatem habet ut adiuuante creatore seipsam excolat, et pio studio possit omnes acquirere et capere uirtutes, per quas et a difficultate cruciante et ab ignorantia caecante liberetur. Quod si ita est, non erit nascentibus animis ignorantia et difficultas supplicium peccati sed proficiendi admonitio et

You may detect here some savour of the Plotinian doctrine of the descent of soul into body. Augustine, however, kept clear of any suggestion that the body is evil, claiming for it derivation from a good source, and capacity for restored perfection. He took not a word of this back in the Retractations, but when working his way slowly through the books *De Ciuitate Dei* he put the doctrine of heredity in safer because more general terms. What man became by the penalty of sin his offspring is in a sense by nature, because ' quod est parens, hoc est et proles.' [1] Augustine does not seem to have observed that in natural generation the original nature of the parent should be reproduced, and not the accidental qualities that may have been acquired. Yet he could speak of a *natura seminalis* in a way to suggest that conclusion.[2]

The intractable question of the origin of the soul, however, remained unsolved, baffling all theories of heredity, and in the long run you find him falling back wearily on a still more general conception of the solidarity of human nature. The Pelagians had now pushed home the question how new-born

perfectionis exordium. Non enim ante omne meritum boni operis paruum est accepisse naturale iudicium, quo sapientiam praeponat errori et quietem difficultati, ut ad haec non nascendo sed studendo perueniat. Quod si agere noluerit, peccati rea iure tenebitur, tanquam quae non bene usa sit ea facultate quam accepit.'

[1] *De Ciuit. Dei*, xiii. 3.

[2] *Ibid.* 14: ' Nondum erat nobis singillatim creata et distributa forma in qua singuli uiueremus, sed iam natura erat seminalis ex qua propagaremur.' He seems to be scenting after ' germ-plasm,' but promptly turns the other way, adding: ' qua scilicet propter peccatum uitiata et uinculo mortis obstricta iusteque damnata, non alterius conditionis homo ex homine nasceretur.'

infants could be injured by the sins of others, and he replied that they have the common human nature which has been vitiated by human sin.[1] But that comes perilously near to a denial of individual life, nor is it clear how this theory can be reconciled with the sinlessness of the Son of Man.

In the interval between the publication of these two suggestions, Augustine formulated a theory which is intimately associated with his name, and which has had grave consequences in theology. He attributed original sin to the lustfulness which in greater or less degree accompanies the act of generation.[2] The act itself, he was careful to insist, is natural and good, and in a sinless man he reckoned that it would have been completely controlled by reason, conformably to the will of the Creator;[3] but as things are he finds a certain taint of sin always present. It is here that he uses that striking figure of the lame man going lamely about a good work. The universal instinct of modesty and reserve, which he illustrates by the contrast of the wilful indecency of the Cynics, is the witness of the human conscience to this element of shame.[4]

[1] *Retract.* i. 10. 'Possunt sane Pelagiani ad suum dogma trahere istam sententiam, et ideo dicere paruulis aliena non nocuisse peccata, quia dixi nulli naturae nocere peccata nisi sua, non intuentes ideo paruulos, qui utique pertinent ad humanam naturam, trahere originale peccatum quia in primis hominibus natura humana peccauit, ac per hoc naturae humanae nulla nocuere peccata nisi sua.'

[2] This first appears explicitly in *De Peccat. Meritis*, i. 29, written when as yet he could praise Pelagius personally. The argument is developed in the two books *De Nuptis et Concupiscentia*, in which he deals at large with the objection that his doctrine dishonours marriage.

[3] *De Nupt. et Concup.* i. 1 and 21. [4] *Ibid.* i. 22.

But for his very imperfect acquaintance with the physiology of generation, it is improbable that Augustine would have ventured on this hypothesis. He seems to have thought that conception immediately accompanied the sexual act. Even so he found almost insuperable difficulties. There should have been a difference in the result as there was more or less of sin mingled with the act of generation, but he could see no difference between the offspring of adultery and the children of a chaste marriage, and it was a puzzling fact that the children of the enfranchised were themselves born in servitude.[1] He cites in illustration the fact that the seed of an oil-olive produces an oleaster; but that throws the argument into confusion, for it is misleading to compare an orderly natural process with a disorder of nature. Augustine attributes the sinlessness of our Lord to the absence of this contamination,[2] and it is obvious that if the element of concupiscence were entirely eliminated from an act of natural generation, the result, according to the hypothesis, would be a conception naturally immaculate. This hypothesis therefore excludes the other two theories of heredity and of human solidarity, and is in turn precluded by them.

It is clear that Augustine did not succeed in explaining, even to his own satisfaction, the perplexing problem of original sin. An examination of his treatment of it shows it resting unexplained on the twofold basis of human experience and ecclesiastical authority. It is to his credit that he did not grasp at the traducian hypothesis of the origin of the soul,

[1] *De Nupt. et Concup.* i. 19. [2] *Ibid.* i. 24.

which would have gone far to solve his difficulty. This reserve is characteristic of all that is best in his treatment of nature. From fidelity to fact he seldom swerved, and never without return. He had the courage to leave things unexplained, perhaps always reluctantly, but without false shame. Two things he held fast through all perplexity: the fact that human nature, perhaps alone of all that we know by experience, is terribly vitiated; and the fact that no degree of corruption can entirely destroy the good that is inherent in nature. The sinful soul, in spite of sin, is more glorious than beings incapable of sin. 'Sicut enim melior est uel aberrans equus quam lapis, propterea non aberrans quia proprio motu et sensu caret, ita est excellentior creatura quae libera uoluntate peccat quam quae propterea non peccat quia non habet liberam uoluntatem.'[1] Though he did not himself say that the virtues of fallen man are *splendida uitia*, that bold assertion of Augustinian theology comes near to his real thought.[2] But if they are vices, remember that they are splendid.

I have completed my review of the *cursus naturae* as it presented itself to the eyes of St. Augustine. It is orderly and good, the expression of the constant will of God. Apparent dislocations of the orderly

[1] *De Lib. Arbitr.* iii. 5.

[2] It is probably based on *De Ciuit. Dei*, xix. 25: 'Nam qualis corporis atque uitiorum potest esse mens domina, ueri Dei nescia nec eius inperio subiugata sed uitiosissimis daemonibus corrumpentibus prostituta? Proinde uirtutes quas sibi habere uidetur, per quas inperat corpori et uitiis ad quodlibet adipiscendum uel tenendum, nisi ad Deum retulerit, etiam ipsae uitia sunt potius quam uirtutes.' But he defends this judgment rather on practical than on theoretic grounds, finding such virtues infected with inordinate pride.

sequence of cause and effect are shown to be nothing else but obscure instances of natural process in ways which human experience has not yet explored. What seems to be evil is reduced to its true proportions, and becomes an element in the harmony of nature which is discordant only to ears imperfectly percipient. But there is one exceptional thing, one cause of movement left undetermined by the sovran will of God. Created will, in angel or man, is free. The creature therefore can turn away from good. There is no objective evil to be chosen by preference, but it is possible to go this way or that in search of good, and self-determination contrary to the will of God becomes evil. It is the only form of evil. It entails consequences which are in a secondary sense evil, but which are so controlled by the sovranty of God as to redress the balance of nature and to resolve discord into harmony. Sin, and continuance in sin, alone remains evil. But even this is made possible for a good end. Man is made capable of sinning in order that he may be free to render a service of love. Thus the possibility of sin contributes to the glory of nature. Actual sin, however, is a disorder, removing the sinner from his proper place in nature. Here may be found the cause of the persistent delusion by which we are led to discover evil in nature. Fallen man is thrust into the neighbourhood of other creatures; he knows himself to be evil, and consequently thinks evil of all that he resembles. Because it would be an evil thing for me to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps, therefore I infer that pestilence and earthquake are evil; because I know that it is wrong

for me to be like horse or mule, whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle, therefore the qualities to the likeness of which I have sunk seem to me evil in themselves. Augustine escaped from this error, to draw a scheme of the world in which all things are good, sin only excepted, and to surmise that sin also may in the long run be turned to the glory of God. He lost himself in some labyrinthine by-ways, but the scheme on the whole is coherent.

APPENDICES

I

THE LIMITS OF THE SUPERNATURAL

(From the *Guardian* of July 27, 1892)

In one of those weighty and pregnant sentences in which the author of the *Analogy* glances outside his own proper subject, he writes as follows :—

'Nor is there any absurdity in supposing that there may be beings in the universe whose capacities, and knowledge, and views may be so extensive as that the whole Christian dispensation may to them appear natural—i.e. analogous or conformable to God's dealings with other parts of His creation ; as natural as the visible known course of things appears to us.'

I cannot help thinking that we have here an example of Butler's grave irony, that to his own mind this supposition was more than a possibility, but that he accepted the crude antithesis of the natural and the supernatural as expressing the common thought of his day, and as affording a basis for his polemic against the Deists. I wish to put forward for consideration the suggestion that this old antithesis, if harmless once, has become fraught with mischief ; and that the logical defence of religion should now proceed upon the lines hinted at in this pregnant sentence of Butler, the antithesis being suppressed.

Of what nature is the antithesis ? Is it purely logical, or is it metaphysical ? If it is the former, it can be dispensed

with ; it is merely a mode of distinguishing our mental operations. That is natural which we perceive or apprehend by certain faculties of our mind ; that is supernatural which we perceive or apprehend by certain other faculties : the natural, say, we apprehend by sense or by the understanding, the supernatural by faith. Then there is no need to suppose any fixed limit between the two ; for there is not necessarily any difference between the object of the understanding and the object of faith. That which is at one time apprehended by faith only may at another time come within the purview of the understanding. Faith may vanish into sight without any change in our exterior conditions. But in that case it is needless to distinguish sharply between faith and our other faculties. If faith is the gift of God, so also is the understanding. If it is obscured in individuals, so also is sight or hearing. If it is clouded or even destroyed by sin, so also undoubtedly are many other powers of the perfect man which are allowed on all hands to be natural. We may then regard faith as part of the ordinary equipment of the complete and perfect man, and so dispense with the logical antithesis of the natural and the supernatural.

But if the antithesis be a metaphysical one, the matter is more serious. And it can hardly be doubted that in England at least it does so present itself to most minds. It suggests the co-existence of two whole worlds of being ; they are not distinguished merely as cognizable to us by separate faculties ; each has its own substantial existence ; each its own laws, which are not necessarily alike ; and the one might be annihilated leaving the other unaffected. The natural and the supernatural have hard and fast limits : the one is cognizable to sense or understanding, the other is eternally to be apprehended by faith only, or by some spiritual faculty of perception hereafter to be developed, which shall transcend the moral certitude of faith ; in this spiritual sense only will faith be swallowed up in sight.

Such is perhaps the common acceptance of the antithesis. It is certainly the source of much difficulty and conflict. Is it true, or is it false ? If it be true, we must face the difficulties and fight out the conflict. But if it is false,

and can be got rid of, there may be great gain, and some of the attacks upon religion may lose all their force. In a certain state of public thought this antithesis, even if erroneous, could do little harm. God was recognized, even by the opponents of religion, as the Author of nature. The defenders acknowledged the same Author of the supernatural order as the proper object of religion. The dual universe was co-ordinated under one Creator and Governor. There was presumably an analogy between the two orders, and something of the supernatural order might be surmised by faith from the study of nature; there was a natural religion; but for the most part faith required direct instruction from the Creator; religion was revealed. In this state of the public mind religion could be attacked only by a blank denial of the supernatural order, which was an irrational proceeding, or by the assertion of an incongruity in the accepted laws and facts of the supernatural order, which showed that it was not from the Author of nature but was the product of a disordered fancy. Such was the attack which Butler, in the concentrated argument of his few pages, crushed conclusively.

The attack has shifted its ground, and now proceeds on two separate lines. The first is that of materialism and positivism. No author of nature is acknowledged, and therefore the existence of the supernatural order can rationally be denied—nay, must be denied. A self-existent universe cannot be dual; if nature be self-existent it is the universe, and there is room for nothing beside. The second is that of agnosticism. If there be two separate orders in the universe, so entirely antithetic, how can they interact? A supernatural world there may be, but it is not cognizable to our natural faculties; and, furthermore, since conduct is a matter of our natural existence, this supernatural order cannot concern our conduct. But the essential thought of Christianity—of religion at large—is supernatural influence over conduct. Religion is therefore an irrational absurdity—the imagined interaction of two worlds between which there is no bridge of communication. It was perhaps in partial anticipation of this objection that the shrewd but narrow mind of Paley demurred to the description of miracles as supernatural, and

substituted the neutral term 'superhuman.' It is perplexing to find a supernatural force affecting so natural a thing as bodily disease.

If the foregoing be correct, the present-day attack upon religion rests entirely upon the antithesis of the natural and the supernatural. The process is obvious. We yield up the natural order to the man of science. He searches it through and through; he finds it complete and consistent. We cannot gainsay him; we believe it to come from the creative will of the unchanging God. Our searcher can find no room for arbitrary action or interference; he will not hear of any inroad from without, any intervention from another world; he finds nature self-sufficient and self-contained, impenetrable to any action of the supernatural. And since we are clearly of the natural order ourselves, the supernatural, if it exist at all, is outside of us, alien to us, unknowable.

We find it impossible to answer the logic of the agnostic, nor do we know how to meet the blank denial of the materialist, who says that he can trace our holiest feelings to the vibration of a nerve-centre. The result is that we are disposed to retire to our trenches, to take our stand behind the breastwork of the faith of which we are conscious. There may be safety here for the individual, but it is an inglorious safety; we leave the enemy to vaunt his triumph, and we leave exposed to him the souls that have not so robust a self-defence. Another result is seen in a tendency to withdraw faith and religion more and more into a remote and circumscribed province of their own. There is an inclination to abandon morality entirely to the natural order, an acceptance of the hedonism which it is the special duty of religion to combat. In a word, we are face to face with an exaggerated spirituality; it is hard to say where lies the greatest danger—on this side materialism, on that side spiritualism.

If we would defend historic Christianity we must either shatter the logic of agnosticism and materialism, or else we must remove the foundation on which they stand. If Christianity be true, and the logic unanswerable, then the foundation must be false. It consists in the metaphysical antithesis of the natural and the supernatural; we have supplied it,

in fact, ourselves. If this be destroyed, the attack is paralysed. The materialist and the agnostic cannot consistently reassert the separate supernatural order if we renounce it. If we pronounce it, in Butler's words, 'as natural as the visible known course of things,' they can hardly gainsay us. The hardest materialist, the most arrogant positivist, does not pretend to have penetrated all the recesses of nature; if we tell him that those facts known as supernatural are the result of natural causes as yet untraced, he may suspend his judgment, but he cannot rationally deny the phenomena. If we accept the universe as one, we shall see alike in the action of quinine, and in the touch of the thaumaturgic hand, the operation of causes moved by the will of God. In the one case the operation is just a little more traceable; that is all. Both are natural; in Butler's definition 'similar, stated, and uniform.' We shall permit the man of science to investigate the natural causes of the 'miracle,' and if they baffle him we shall bid him be patient, for nature has not yet revealed to him all her secrets. In what respect is it more miraculous that a human will should cast a mountain directly into the sea, than that a human will should set in motion countless molecules of nerve and muscle stuff, with the result that the Isthmus of Darien is cut through? Only that in the one case the process is very imperfectly understood, while in the other it is not understood at all.

It is impossible within the limits of an article like this to do more than barely indicate the lines which the argument might take. If we hold a monistic theory of the universe we have our answer to the materialist's objection to 'interference.' The word becomes unmeaning. We hold with him that nature is all and one, only it is far wider than he thinks. There is no *without* from which interference can come. God is not without. He acts in nature, and His action is uniform. His action on the matter of the universe is as uniform, as natural, and at the same time, we shall be bold to say, as free as the action of man's will upon the matter of his muscles.

The agnostic again loses on this hypothesis the hard and fast line between the knowable and the unknowable on which

he bases his polemic. The whole universe is in itself knowable, and its parts pass by insensible gradations from the known to the unknown. The faculty of faith by which we apprehend the unknown is itself a part of the one natural order of the universe.

Shall we then abandon the term, and cease to speak of the supernatural? That would be difficult, perhaps impossible. Our thought cannot cast loose from words, or treat them in any such arbitrary fashion. The word 'supernatural' corresponds with an existing, and perhaps an indestructible idea. What is possible and necessary is to clear the idea from false and mischievous accretions, and to see that the word does not, in use, slip from the control of the idea.

The idea of the supernatural is defined by the idea of the natural. Its meaning is determined by the limit set between the two. The sharp antithesis between the two presupposes an absolute fixity for this limit. It is taken for granted that the two are finally and essentially different. We may have been mistaken in our calculation of the boundary; we may have supposed a phenomenon to be supernatural which further experience has proved to be natural; but the limit, though miscalculated, is real and abiding, traceable if not yet traced. The conception of the universe which I would urge as the true one conciliates this antithesis. The universe is one; one not merely as a dual existence co-ordinated under one creative will or law—the argument of the *Analogy*—but one in essence and in order, one in cause and operation, one alike to science and to philosophy, and one to the theology which is the sum of all sciences and the key to all philosophies. And if the universe be ontologically one, it is a false philosophy which should read into it even a logical dualism.

But if we abandon as false the dualism which sets the supernatural and the natural in antithesis, how shall we define the supernatural? It must be defined by the idea of the natural. The only limit that can now be recognized is that marked out by the extent of our knowledge. It has always been acknowledged by those to whom the antithesis was most dear that the natural world is that in which the understanding works. Let this be accepted as the definition of

the natural—*modes of existence which are understood*, and then by inevitable dichotomy the supernatural will be *modes of existence which are not understood.*

We shall then see that this is no immovable limit, but, on the contrary, one that is shifting continually with the advance of science. We shall even see that the limit cannot be the same for all minds. To some minds phenomena will remain supernatural which to others are clearly natural. But we shall not deride the former as superstitious, nor denounce the latter as impious. We shall see that the former are not morally inferior, unless in like manner the man who does not know Chinese is morally inferior to the man who knows it; but we shall regard the latter as having made a real progress—a progress that is fulfilling the purpose of God, bringing them one step nearer to that perfection of knowledge suggested by Butler, which makes the whole Christian dispensation appear natural, 'as natural as the visible known course of things appears to us.'

We may thus usefully and safely retain the term supernatural. It will represent those modes of existence, of the reality of which we have no doubt, being convinced thereof by the assurance of faith or even by the evidence of experience, but the causality of which our understanding has failed to investigate. Its proper use will be regulated by the average intelligence of the average educated man. There will always be many minds to whom the mysteries of nature are a sealed book; they will not be our standard. There may from time to time be exalted spirits that can see, by some divine intuition, far into the dim vista of causes; we shall, according to our temperament or our judgment, deride them as madmen, denounce them as impostors, or reverence them as inspired. Time and the slow growth of knowledge will show whether they were prophets or seers of lying visions; but in neither case will they be our standard. The 'supernatural' will remain for us all that lies for the time being beyond the actual understanding of intelligent men.

It is obvious that this will not be a contraction, but rather an expansion of the term. We shall have to recognize as supernatural those phenomena of life, such as the assimilation

of matter by the organic germ, which are the chosen study of the biologist, but which have as yet defied his analysis. And it would perhaps be no small gain to the clearness of our views if we were to arrive at the unity of thought as regards all the phenomena of life which such a classification, even if only temporary, would involve. Life has its higher and lower forms, its higher and lower powers, its higher and lower aims ; in all, or nearly all of them, it seems to be the meeting-point of spirit and matter ; and it is exactly in this concurrence of spirit and matter that belief and scepticism find their battle-ground. Creation, miracles, sacraments, and prayer all rest upon the veritable interaction of spirit and matter. If, then, we can arrive at a natural philosophy which shall classify all these great religious phenomena, so to call them, under a common head with all the indisputably veritable phenomena of life, of whatever character—if all alike are certainly supernatural, because sealed to the understanding, probably similar in their mode of causation, and conceivably, though with varying probability, capable of investigation by the methods of science, then we shall not, indeed, have 'reconciled' science and faith—the phrase itself is an absurdity—but we shall have taken away the grounds alike for the contempt of the sciolist and for the jealousy of the believer. Tell a man of science that your prayer may bring rain, and he smiles incredulous ; tell him that this is effected by an immediate causation, differing in kind from those which he knows to be the causes of rain, and he will probably grow angry and intolerant. But tell him that just as your spoken wish, acting through a very obscure chain of causes, brings you a cup of water from a friendly hand, so your wish uttered in prayer, acting in exactly the same manner upon a slightly more obscure chain of causes, brings you water from the clouds, and he can but suspend his judgment ; laughter will now be evidence only of shallowness and narrowness. Tell him that the healing of disease by a word is but a miraculous—that is, an extraordinary —manifestation of knowledge and will, of the same kind as that which guides the surgeon's knife, and you may at least silence his answer that 'Miracles do not happen.' They are

happening every day. The wonder is only a matter of degree.

It is to meet a new attack that I propose this change of front. I do not regard it as involving anything of concession or compromise. I think of it rather as a forward movement, a counter-attack. I would not have the spiritual give ground ; I would have it seize the whole field.

II

NATURE AND SUPERNATURE

(From the *Church Times* of May 15 and 22, 1914)

For many years I have sat contentedly at the feet of Dr. Sanday. His influence over me began by accident, when I was yet a schoolboy and he was little known; it suffered partial eclipse for a time, when I was of the age that demands abundance of clear-cut definition; but it returned full tide, commanding both interest and gratitude. His great charm as a teacher is that he challenges criticism. There is perhaps no man who has less of the magisterial temper. He does not reserve his judgments until they are completely rounded; he publishes tentative solutions of difficulties, and fresh statements of questions which he does not pretend to have solved. The Bishop of Oxford has talked about sincerity, with a glance, it would seem, in his direction. But he is the most liquidly sincere of men. He loves to do his critical work, testing his belief and the grounds for it, under the eyes of men. There are those who would have him work in secret until he has some assured result; they dread his inchoate syntheses and incomplete analyses; they expect disappointment from the former and unnecessary disturbance from the latter. But he knows that the way to settlement lies through disturbance, and the way to fruition through disappointment. He would take his disciples by the hand to go with him all the way, not transport them to the end of the journey on a magic carpet. Therefore he is perfectly candid with them, perfectly

sincere; not always perfectly wise, seldom or never perfectly prudent.

He replies to the Bishop of Oxford, not without anger. His habitual candour forbids him to make a secret of it. 'I must confess,' he writes, 'that I began this pamphlet[1] in an indignant mood.' But if he let the sun go down twice or thrice upon his wrath, he hastened to abate it. In the finished pamphlet there is left hardly a trace of such feeling. 'As I look back,' he concludes, 'I am conscious of having passed through more than one turbid vein both in writing and in thinking. But, as I bring what I have written to an end, I hope that I can do so on the noble note of *Samson Agonistes*, "With calm of mind, all passion spent." For any sins of thought or of word of which I may have been guilty, at any stage of this controversy, I humbly ask forgiveness.' I resume my place at his feet.

But critically. He would ask nothing else of a disciple. My criticism, whatever it may be worth, must go pretty deep, for I would burrow under the very foundations of his argument. There are three articles of the Creed which he interprets in a sense different from that in which they are commonly received, and his interpretation is the result of a 'comprehensive inquiry into the general subject of Miracles and the Supernatural.' I set aside the article of the Ascension, for it does not seem to me that in this case Dr. Sanday's interpretation differs seriously from that of most orthodox Christians. There remain the article of the Virgin-birth, and the article of the Resurrection of our Lord. Dr. Sanday's claim is that he believes both. 'I would ask leave,' he says, 'to affirm once more my entire and strong belief in the central reality of the Supernatural Birth and the Supernatural Resurrection.' But the ordinary interpretation of these events makes them, in his judgment, miraculous after a fashion that raises a great difficulty. It is needless to say that he has no vulgar objection to miracle. Describing the process by which he reached his present standpoint, he says: 'I was not disposed to put any limit to the divine

[1] *Bishop Gore's Challenge to Criticism*: a Reply to the Bishop of Oxford's Open Letter on *The Basis of Anglican Fellowship*.

power or to ascribe any necessity to natural law as such. I did not for a moment doubt the power of God to make what exceptions He pleased. I only asked for better evidence of His will to make them.' That is the point. He requires evidence. And these two events, as commonly understood, are miraculous in such sort that exceptional evidence is required; there is an overwhelming presumption, itself founded on evidence, against their occurrence. He is at Hume's standpoint, with a difference; not all miracles, but these miracles, are incredible.

He thinks that his attitude cannot be said, in the Bishop of Oxford's words, to be based 'on a mistaken view of natural law, and on something much less than a Christian belief in God.' I am quite sure that his belief in God does not fall short of that of any Christian, but I do contend that his view of natural law is entirely mistaken, and that his difficulties are mainly due to this mistake.

He does not ascribe any necessity to natural law as such. No; but for one who has the Christian idea of God, natural law means creative will. And this imposes a necessity. Dr. Sanday would, no doubt, accept the saying of St. Augustine that *Creatoris uoluntas* is *rerum necessitas*. And the Will of God is stable. Thus a theistic conception of the world provides for that continuous and necessary order of nature which it is difficult to explain on any other hypothesis. To accept miracles in vulgar profusion should not be easier for a believer in God than for an unbeliever, but rather more difficult. He should expect the course of nature to be most orderly, most regular, most uniform.

It does not, however, seem quite as regular as we might expect, and some of the apparent irregularities are what we call miracles. Are they real irregularities? Dr. Sanday takes them for such, calling them 'exceptions.' He then distinguishes. Some of them occasion little difficulty. 'I was perfectly ready,' he says, 'to accept and believe whatever could be explained by the operation of a higher cause in the course of nature.' I demur to this language. What are 'higher' and 'lower' causes in nature? The comparison seems to me unmeaning. He continues: 'But as we see

the Divine Providence in action, the highest cause never *contradicts* the lower. It overrules it and diverts it from its original direction, but it never breaks the proper sequence of cause and effect.' That is loosely said. When I hold up a stone I do directly counteract the force which draws it towards the earth. That force is not in abeyance; it is working all the time, but it is 'contradicted.' And it is mutual contradiction that produces the result. To say that one cause overrules and diverts another is a very inexact statement. The truth is rather that various causes contribute to an effect, which is the result of their combination. Everything that happens in nature is thus the result of an incalculable number of concurrent causes, some of which we can trace, while the rest are beyond our ken. That may be held just as true of a miracle as of all other events.

Pursuing his line of thought, Dr. Sanday tested evidence, and this is what he found: 'There was abundant evidence for the operation of higher spiritual causes; but when it came to a breach of the physical order, the evidence was always found to be insufficient.' That pleases me, in that spiritual causes are kept within the physical order; Dr. Sanday will not tease us with the false distinction of natural and spiritual, which we owe to Luther's mistranslation of ψυχικός. But I want to know how anything can be identified as 'a breach of the physical order.' If anything happens, it is presumably in the physical order; if anything is said, on good evidence or bad, to have happened, how can I determine that its occurrence would be out of the physical order? What is the standard by which I recognize this order? Do I know it right through, so that I can tell at a glance that some alleged event does not belong to it? If Dr. Sanday had been shut in a dungeon for the last fifty years, and now issuing forth heard a man pretending to hold an audible conversation with a friend across the sea, I am sure that he would consider the alleged marvel a breach of the physical order, and he would probably find the evidence insufficient; in a word, he would accuse the man of romancing. It could soon be explained, of course; but for the moment the use of the telephone would seem to be a breach of the physical order. To an

ignorant man, no doubt; but how wide is the distance between one man's ignorance and another man's knowledge? Does any man so know nature through and through as to be able to say that an alleged event is a breach of the physical order?

Taking this for a possibility, Dr. Sanday went forward to a distinction 'between events that are *supra naturam*—exceptional, extraordinary, testifying to the presence of higher spiritual forces—and events, or alleged events, that are *contra naturam*, or involve some definite reversal of the natural physical order.' I suspect this coupling of the words *natural* and *physical* as if they had distinct meanings, and I also fear that spiritual forces are here distinguished from natural forces; but I must delve deeper than this for effective criticism. What are these things *supra naturam* which Dr. Sanday finds credible? They are events, unusual and therefore miraculous, but events that we can observe, note, and record. And where do they occur? Where, if not in nature? Then they are not *supra naturam*. But is it on account of their cause that they are thus described? Do they occur without a natural cause? But what is a natural cause? What else but the cause of something which occurs in nature? *This* occurs in nature: therefore it has a natural cause. *This* causes something in nature: therefore it is a natural cause. What escape is there? For a theist the Will of God is the ultimate cause of all that is in nature; therefore the Will of God is the supreme natural cause. What theist denies it?

Supra naturam; what does it mean? I can find no meaning in the phrase except on the assumption of a closed order of nature, contained within fixed limits. What is outside? God? Various spiritual forces? But what ground have we for such dualism? If God be the Supreme Natural Cause, how shall we place Him outside nature? Where shall we set the limits of nature? I do not know any sense in which things occurring in nature can be described as *supra naturam*, or ascribed to causes *supra naturam*. This description or ascription seems to suggest a false supernaturalism. Dr. Sanday says that he believes in the Supernatural Birth and the Supernatural Resurrection of our Lord. Good: there is a

true sense of the word. But the term is relative. That is supernatural to a given part of nature which lies outside its ordinary endowment. There are powers in man which are supernatural to a dog, and equally the scenting power of a hound is supernatural to a man. Miraculous power is supernatural to a man because it is apart from his ordinary endowments. To work a miracle is precisely to do something which a man in the ordinary course of nature cannot do; it is extraordinary. But that is all. The fact that it is done in nature shows that it is not *supra naturam*. To put it there is to set up an absolute distinction of nature and supernature, of the natural and the supernatural. There is no such distinction in reality. The true distinction is merely relative, and is within the large order of nature taken as a whole.

So I go farther than Dr. Sanday. He allows events *supra naturam*, disallows events *contra naturam*. I allow neither. He quotes the saying of St. Augustine that portents happen *non contra naturam sed contra quam est nota natura*. What more is needed? If he woke to-day from fifty years' sleep, the use of the telephone would seem to him *contra naturam*, but only because it would be contrary to his knowledge of nature. How do the 'nature miracles' of the Gospel differ from this miracle of modern science as it would have appeared to our grandfathers? Dr. Sanday may safely refuse credence to any story told of things *contra naturam*. I, for my part, will refuse credence to any story that may be told of things *supra naturam*. But by what method of divination does Dr. Sanday ascertain that the story of the Birth or of the Resurrection, as ordinarily told, comes under either head? If these things happened, they happened in nature, and had natural causes. They were extraordinary events, perhaps unique, but not the less natural. Unique things do happen, and happen in ways to confound our expectations based on the ordinary course of nature. The sporting of plants may serve for an example. We do not suppose this to be *contra naturam* or *supra naturam*. So, too, it is only in a loose sense of the word that we say it is unnatural for a man to be born with six toes; we assume a natural cause for it, though

it does not occur in the ordinary course of nature. Those greater variations to which recent biologists of the school of De Vries look for the origin of species are of the same kind; they do not occur in any known sequence of cause and effect. But they occur in nature, and we assume for them an unknown natural cause. If one should think that cause to be nothing else but the will of God, it would none the less be a natural cause. Let such cause be assumed for the Birth of Christ. 'Ex parte matris,' says St. Thomas, 'natiuitas illa fuit naturalis.' Of the other part is the operation of God, 'miraculosa,' says St. Thomas, but what more natural? Dr. Sanday says that he could not easily bring himself to regard that Birth as unnatural. Let us ask him to do no such thing.

Sitting at his feet to criticize as well as to learn, I must tell him my mind, that his attitude is based precisely on 'a mistaken view of natural law,' a view inherited from the mediæval schoolmen, a view of nature as a closed order, contained within fixed limits and more or less thoroughly explored. I am not merely answering him. If the egoism may be pardoned, I would like to say that I wrote and published the first adumbration of this argument as long ago as the year 1892. I have learnt much since then; not least from Dr. Sanday.

III

DR. McTAGGART'S IDEALISM

SAMUEL JOHNSON did not dispose of Berkeley by kicking a stone. The stone, the foot, and the Doctor's temper, were alike parts of the ideal construction of the world. Berkeley's destructive criticism has not been answered, and is not likely to be answered; he has left it certain that the existence of Matter, as a real Thing independent of the mind which constructs it out of formless sensation, is at least unproved, and is to all appearance unprovable; but as a constructive theory his Idealism is open to grave objections. Attempts have been made to amend it. Dr. McTaggart has worked hard in this sense; he has filled up some gaps, and his system is interesting, if only as calling attention to a need which is still left unsatisfied.

An ideal construction of the universe starting from the human mind rests on a foundation too narrow for the building. Geocentric Idealism, so to call it, is compatible with a geocentric universe; but it is at odds with itself when it constructs an universe in which Man is seen as occupying the surface of one of the smaller satellites of one of the smaller suns. This curious arrangement does not make the thing impossible. It is possible that we, occupying the position which our own intelligent observation assigns to us, may be ourselves the authors of the whole grouping; but the conclusion is staggering, and the mind can hardly accept it. If we get over the difficulty presented by the light of a 'Nova' reaching us for the first time after a journey measured by decades or centuries, there are still more complicated prob-

lems, and the circumstances of the discovery of Neptune rise in protest.

Dr. McTaggart comes to the rescue. His scheme of a collegiate intelligence might be required to complete even a geocentric Idealism, for Berkeley's doctrine leads direct to Solipsism. Solipsism is tolerable on a purely theistic basis, and it may stand on the Monism which the dualism of Plotinus demands for its complement; but it can account for no single universe ideally constructed by the human mind. Dr. McTaggart will not hear of a theistic hypothesis, for he insists on starting from common human experience, and he has too keen a sense of reality for pure Monism. He thinks there is good ground for believing in a common or collegiate reason. Men are Selfs; of that he has no doubt; but they are evidently capable of common action, and why not in the region of pure thought? Thus he escapes from Solipsism. But his conception carries him farther. He escapes also from planetary conditions; indeed, from existence in time as ordinarily understood. He assigns to the Selfs which we know as telluric men a boundless existence. Coming here they recognize one another in bodies, each of which is 'only a temporary combination of matter'—a part, that is to say, of the whole construction that we make of sensation; they existed before that combination was made, and they will continue to exist when it is dissolved. The immortality of man is the corner-stone of Dr. McTaggart's system; he does not believe in the absorption of the Self into the Whole. He thus arrives at a collegiate intelligence which is eternal. Here is made that ideal construction of the Universe, glimpses of which we catch in our fleshly tabernacles. The discovery of Neptune is explained.

There is one obvious thing to be said of all this. It is pure mythology; it falls into line with the more detailed story of Er, the son of Armenius. It is not on that account to be rejected, for mythologies tell much truth; neither philosophy nor religion can very well dispense with them. I would further observe that Dr. McTaggart arrives at his goal by an Act of Faith. I shall not quarrel with him on that account. Belief in something that I cannot prove

underlies almost every action of my life. Our ordinary beliefs, though dialectically unproved or unsusceptible of proof, can be verified by experience; they are found to work, and we are all pragmatist enough to be thereby comforted. But Dr. McTaggart's faith stretches beyond the confines of experience. If he ask me to say his *Credo*, he makes severe demands upon me. He supposes an unanimity of Selfs which passes anything known to my experience. Nay, it contradicts my experience. Men, as I know them on this planet, are unanimous in hardly anything. There are a thousand millions of us or more, and our minds are about as various as our bodies. Perhaps it may be said that the divergences frequent among us in our fleshly tabernacles are due to the corruptible body which presses down the soul, and that other Selfs in happier circumstances are free from them. Our few millions may be treated as a negligible minority set against an infinite number of such happier Selfs. But this other-worldliness engenders doubt. What guarantee have I that all those other Selfs are not subject to planetary conditions like ours? Reasoning from analogy, I should expect that to be the case. Then the farther you extend the bounds of the universe the harder of attainment becomes this unanimity.

There is something else in Dr. McTaggart's hypothesis even more inexplicably at variance with my knowledge of my own self. I stumble on the familiar difficulty of Causation. The causes studied by natural philosophers are part and parcel of the whole ideal construction. They run a course, and imperatively demand a beginning. Unless the whole construction is at fault, there must be this beginning; and the construction is incomplete if no provision is made for it. Now what is it that I really know of Causation? My knowledge springs from the fact that I myself can do things. I view myself as a Cause; I see other things done which are not done by myself, or not wholly by myself, and I look for other causes. I throw a stone. When I come to analyse this action with sufficient scientific knowledge, I can distinguish various elements in the movement of the stone. I observe that it describes a curve, more or less accurately corre-

sponding to a section of a cone. I observe eccentricities which appear to be caused by the wind. I observe still more erratic movements, which I am able to refer to the shape of the stone, especially if it be flat, and I learn to attribute these to the pressure of the atmosphere at rest. I conclude to a number of causes determining the flight of the stone, over which I seem to have no control. But there is another cause residing in myself. I throw the stone at a mark. Its flight is determined, partly by my aim, partly by my skill or lack of skill in throwing, partly by those other causes which I cannot control. What is meant by my aim? It is an intention, a purpose, of hitting something. That intention springs from a desire. But the desire, of itself, is infructuous. It promotes action, but not necessarily; I am able to refrain from action. I can choose, in many cases, whether I will act or refrain from acting. We arrive at the Will. What is the Will? Not a separable part of myself—any such notion seems to be unfounded; not even a separable endowment of my nature—any such notion is superfluous; but simply an operation of my Self. I choose to hit that object with a stone. My choice is suggested by various motives, but it remains mine. How do I give it effect? By an obscure physiological process my Will produces motion—the motion of the stone. I can trace the movement back from the stone to my fingers, from my fingers to muscles, from muscles to nerves, from nerves to a cell of the brain; I arrive at an imperceptible movement of the molecules of that cell. What sets them in motion? It is an act of Will. I myself set them in motion, and the rest follows. This I know of causation; to deny my knowledge of it is to deny all knowledge. It is the whole of my immediate knowledge in this field. I infer other causes from my knowledge of this cause.

This being so, what is more reasonable than to suppose that all causation springs from Will? The causes that are not within my own control I reasonably refer to a Will other than my own. What Will is this? Shall we assume a collegiate Will corresponding to the collegiate Thought which makes the ideal construction of Dr. McTaggart's universe? The

assumption would go far to complete his scheme, but is it tolerable? If absolute unanimity of thought in a multitude of Selfs be accepted with difficulty, it is far more difficult to accept a like unanimity of Will. The demand made upon us by such an Act of Faith is enormous. The hypothesis of theism seems more reasonable, and the mythology of the first chapter of Genesis holds together better than that which Dr. McTaggart designs. An Act of Faith in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, in whose Thought the universe is ideally constructed, from whose Will all proceeds, of whose Thought we so partake that we can read the structure of things, and of whose Will we have an image in ourselves—this is possible. The hypothesis of Creative Will involves tremendous moral difficulties, with which St. Augustine did battle as few men have done before or since, but it satisfies the understanding.

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